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LETTERS TO A SCHOOL-BOY.

BY HIS FATHER.



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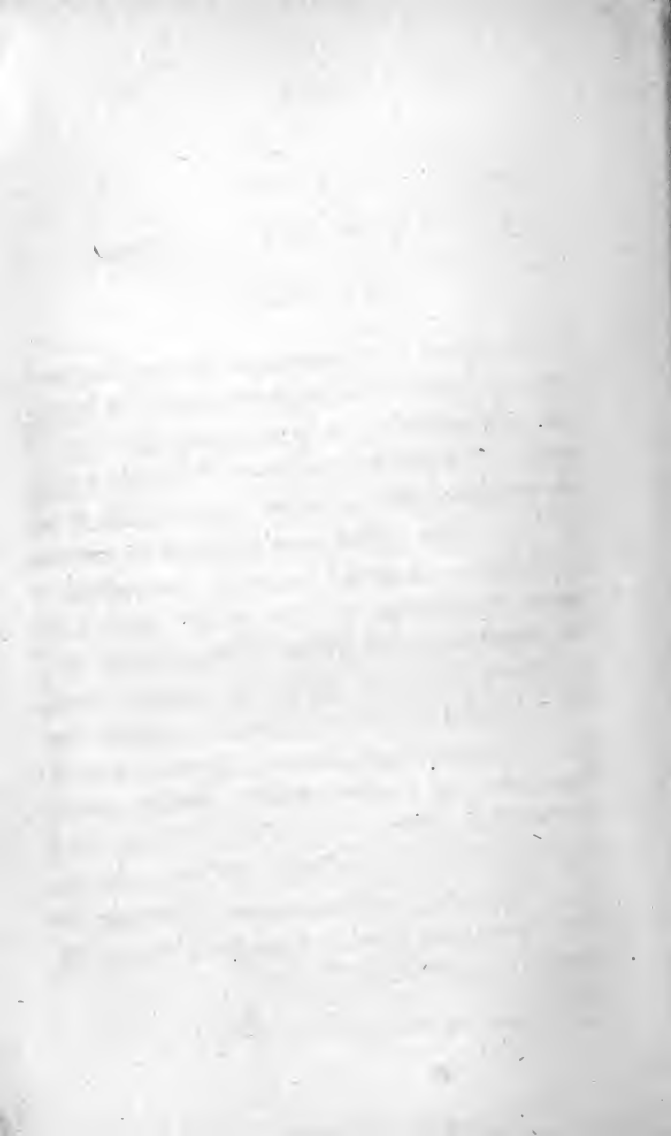
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NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

THESE letters were written to my son, fourteen years of age, while absent at school. A father, who understands the temptations and moral perils that beset the pathway of a boy of that age at school, cannot conceal his solicitude if he would. These letters were designed to put the youth upon his guard, to make him watchful against temptation, to impress his mind with the importance and value of school-days, and to inspire his soul with the noblest aims. They express just what every thoughtful and anxious parent would say to his son at school. They treat of studies, books, games, sports, companions, duties, temptations, morals, and religion. As I deemed them necessary for my son, they may prove of some advantage to other men's sons; and so they are given to the public in this form.



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LETTERS TO A SCHOOL-BOY.

THE BOY FATHER TO THE MAN.

Sept. 15, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: Although it is scarcely five days since you left home, it seems a month to us, who miss you first when we wake at morn, and last when we fall asleep at night. Your letter announcing your safe arrival came duly to hand, putting an end to our anxieties about the perils of a boy of fourteen years traveling one hundred and forty miles. Well, you have performed the feat, and the result is more satisfactory to me than it would have been if I had made a package of you, and forwarded you by the Adams's Express Company. It shows that you have a good degree of self-reliance, without which a boy never makes much of a man.

Have you stopped to think how important is the present period of your life to future man-

hood? I have been thinking of it more than ever since you left home. The weeks and months of your school-days will soon have passed away, and their influence be realized for weal or woe. Whether you become a merchant, farmer, mechanic, lawyer, or minister, doubtless you will make such a man as you are a school-boy. Your character and course of life will be determined by these brief years of preparation in your boyhood. "The boy is father to the man." "The way the twig is bent the tree's inclined." You are a twig now; and I hope you will make a comely branch of the ancestral tree when you are full grown.

This subject assumes such an air of importance just now in my mind, that I have decided to write to you a series of letters, in which I shall endeavor to present those elements of character that will insure you a future success, whatever calling or profession you may choose. You may accept this letter as the first of the series.

I would impress upon your mind, in the outset, that *character* is the secret of true success; and hence your leading purpose, now and always, should be to possess this more than magical

power. Of course this cannot be done without good materials or virtues. No vice can be made a component part of good character. As well can the darkness of night help make the light of day. It will not do to attempt to weave a little mischief into it here and there, and expect that the character will all be good ; that mischief is an odd and irregular thread that will spoil the whole web.

Many boys suppose that money gives success ; that rich men's sons alone can tread the royal road to the highest distinction. I hope that you do not believe such a palpable untruth. With your eyes open, you can but see that many of the poorest boys of our land have made the best and noblest men. It is equally true, also, that many school-boys, having the smallest advantages, have become the ripest scholars and statesmen. I need not encumber this sheet with many examples. Your mind will turn at once to our late lamented President Lincoln, who was as good as he was great. So long as our national history contains the life of such a man, no boy in our land can plead that wealth and the greatest literary advantages are necessary

to secure the highest success. When a boy from a western log-cabin, in which he lived until he was twenty-one years old, without schools and books, becomes a distinguished lawyer, and finally the best beloved president who ever ruled the United States, there remains no foundation for the plea that no one can achieve success without money and the most ample literary advantages.

But you must not overlook the real secret of President Lincoln's success. It was not so much knowledge and wisdom, though he possessed these in a high degree, as it was *character*, that made him the best president we ever had. His virtues won the public heart, so that in the darkest hour of the rebellion the people reposed in him the utmost confidence. It was this trust in Mr. Lincoln's personal character, and not our armies, that really saved our country. With an unprincipled time-serving politician in the presidential chair, a man in whom the people would not confide, our armies could not have saved us. Mr. Lincoln's *character* held the people together like a magnet, by drawing their hearts to himself, so that they did not

divide into stormy factions. This is the point that I would have you mark, above all others, in Mr. Lincoln's career. His knowledge, wisdom, and every acquisition were used so as to develope *character*; and this is precisely what you and every other school-boy should strive to possess. Your studies in school, your reading, your plans and purposes, should all become subordinate to this one grand object.

You may point to certain distinguished men who have lived, and say, "They had not the moral principle that Mr. Lincoln possessed." Very true; and they did not hold the hearts of the people as Mr. Lincoln did. The contrast in this regard vindicates the position that I have taken.

Recently I heard a fact that illustrates this subject. A youth was on his way to New Orleans to seek his fortune. On the steamer in which he sailed were many men, young and old; and few, if any of them, were principled against wrong-doing. Other youth and young men gambled, tippled, smoked, and used profane oaths with lavish wickedness. The youth

in question stood aloof from this vicious company. He declined to gamble, tipple, smoke, and he would not swear. A wealthy merchant observed his noble bearing, and concluded that such a youth would make a trustworthy clerk in his business. He secured his services without delay; and that youth is now a rich and estimable man, doing more good by his virtues than he can by his money. In this case you will take notice that all the advantages and acquisitions of the boy resulted in the formation of a *character* that won the merchant's admiration. It was not so much what he knew of arithmetic, grammar, philosophy, book-keeping, and other studies, although these were very important in their place, as it was the genuine manhood into which the improvement of his early advantages developed.

I think that you must understand me, so that, without prolonging this letter, you will be prepared to consider well the topics upon which I shall write hereafter. Whether my letters contain thoughts about study, economy, games, companions, home, school, or what not, they will point to the relation of all these things to

those elements of character without which there can be no true success.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

CHOICE OF COMPANIONS.

Sept. 22, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: First of all I think of your companions—those intimate associates whose company will make you better or worse. It is a good maxim: “Better alone than in bad company.” Scores of proverbs teach the same important truth. “Tell me with whom thou goest, and I will tell thee what thou doest.” “Tell me what company thou keepest, and I will tell thee what thou art.”

Then make a wise choice of companions. You will not need many associates, although I would have you treat all your schoolmates well. “A crowd is not company.” There are a large number of boys in your school, and it would be strange if some of them were not improper associates for you. Among so large a flock there will be one or more black sheep. See that you

do not choose the black sheep for a bosom companion. A small spatter from a spider will soil your clothes.

When John Newton, who afterward became the famous minister, was a boy, he was sent from home to a boarding-school. He was quite a good boy when he left his parents, and intended, no doubt, to continue to be good. But there was one vicious scholar in the school. He was profane, rude, vulgar, disobedient, and very secret in his way of perpetrating mischief. John did not suspect that he was a bad boy; he thought that he was much better than he proved to be. The result was that he took the vicious boy into his confidence, and made him a boon companion. Soon the sad effects of vicious companionship began to appear in John's character. He lost his gentlemanly bearing and his refined manner of address. He became rude and rowdyish, an idle, disobedient scholar; in short, within a few months he was a worse boy than his associate. Finally, he ran away from school, resolved upon having his own way. He did not go home; but he wandered hither and thither, a poor, miserable,

wretched fellow. He became intemperate, and a gambler, and at last he went to sea, where he excelled all the wicked sailors in iniquity. Not one of them could swear like him; he tasked his brain to find the most appalling words of profanity. Not one could vie with him in moral corruption. Not one gloried so much in his shame. For years he was a marvel of wickedness. At length, however, the Spirit of God reached him, and his mother's prayers were answered. He became a Christian, and a minister of the Gospel.

While John Newton was running his career of sin he ruined a young sailor. He associated with him on board his ship, and corrupted him by his vicious example. The sailor became very much like John himself. In time, however, they separated, and many years intervened before they met again. John Newton had become a useful minister, and his old associate was dying in his guilt and shame. Newton found him in this condition, and he exhorted him to repent and accept Christ as his only Saviour. The ruined man was in great agony of spirit, and rolled from side to side, charging

Newton with having accomplished his ruin ; but he did not yield his heart to God. He died in his impenitence and guilt ; and Newton himself said that although God had forgiven his own sins, and would take him to heaven, it would always be true that there was one soul in hell which his own wicked example sent thither.

A boy once came to school to me at — Institute. His father was a wealthy merchant in Boston ; his mother was a beautiful Christian woman, whom the son ought to have loved with all his heart. But he was sent away to school when he was thirteen or fourteen years of age, and he found bad company. He became a bad boy, and waxed worse and worse, until at sixteen years of age he was expelled from the school. He came to me after his expulsion, and I received him, hoping to make a good boy of him ; but I did not succeed. I kept him one term ; and then I told his father that I should not feel justified in keeping him longer, and thereby jeopardizing the character of other boys in school. Evil associates did all this mischief, and almost broke the heart of his parents.

Beware of boys who swear, as well as those

who are rude. Especially beware of those who seem to regard it as a manly trait to be rowdyish, and glory in their vulgarity and profanity. Shun also idle boys, as they do not appreciate the object of going to school. Keep aloof from boys who use tobacco and strong drink; they are not safe companions. Boys who are continually getting into trouble with their companions avoid; there is something wrong about them. Amiable, lovely, gentlemanly boys never have such broils with their associates. Turn away from boys who never like their teachers, and are fretting about them, and berating them to their fellow-pupils; this class of boys are usually bad scholars, and need a good training to make them better.

The Bible says that "evil communications corrupt good manners;" do not the above facts prove this? The truth is so universally established in every community that all persons believe it. Then remember this truth, and repeat this text over and over, when you behold boys who are not what they should be. I had rather you would catch the small-pox than their bad example. Sickness is far preferable to vice.

Indeed, I would rather you would die than to have you become like many boys whom I have seen.

I do not say this because I fear that you may slide into gross wickedness. I expect that you will be a good boy, and I do not expect anything else. I know that you understand what true manliness is, and that you are capable of attaining it.

Neither do I say this to make you suspicious of your playmates. I should deplore this. I simply mean to put you upon your guard. You can treat all with proper respect, and still have your eyes open to perceive "evil communications." "A white glove may conceal a dirty hand."

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

OBJECT OF GAMES.

Sept. 28, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: Your letter came to hand duly, and I replied in a brief note to your inquiry about games.* I desire now to speak again of the matter of which I wrote so briefly. The danger of all games of chance and pleasure, like bowling, cards, etc., is that they may lead to gambling, which is one of the worst vices. Unless a person is on his guard, and engages in these things as a recreation merely, there is danger that he will begin to play for money, or something else. It is just as bad to play for gingerbread or apples as it is for money, as the principle is the same in both. The boy who plays "deep" with marbles, gambles just as really as the man who plays for money. The sin does not lie in the article played for, but in the bad principle of action. A boy who steals

* In the gymnasium he found a bowling-alley, such as are now connected with gymnasiums generally in colleges and seminaries, and he wrote to his father to learn whether it would be right for him to participate in this game.

a cent or a pin, is a thief before God just as really as he who steals a dollar. And he becomes a thief when he decides to steal the cent or apples, and not when the article actually comes into his possession. Hence, you can see just where to be guarded against the wrongdoing—when you decide to perform an act, or not to perform it. Keeping this in view, these things that are not wrong in themselves will not be likely to injure any one. But losing sight of this, bowling for recreation or pleasure might lead to great evil.

I know a young man who is miserable and wretched now, and yet when he was fifteen years old he was very particular about his conduct. He refused to tend store for a man because he sold intoxicating drinks. Subsequently he was going to New York, when he was eighteen or twenty years of age, and on board the steamer there was card-playing. He was a spectator at first, and for a whole hour or more declined to play cards, although the men were playing only for pleasure. At length, however, he consented to play “a little,” and was very successful. He was carried away with

the game, and the more he played the better he liked it, and the more he wanted to play.

In a little while one of the company proposed to play for a small sum of money. This young man would not do it at first; but he found himself so successful that he finally consented to play a single game for money. He played and won. Then he played another game and won, and still another. But his good fortune changed, and he soon lost all that he had won. Then he was induced to put up his gold watch against that of his associate. It was his father's watch, and he was carrying it only on this occasion of his going to New York. But he was so sure of winning, and thus having a gold watch of his own, that he consented to stake his father's watch. The result was that he lost the watch; and his father, who was poor, never saw it again.

It was on that fatal evening that he sacrificed his principles, and yielded to temptation. He was never good afterward. From that day to this he has been going down lower and lower, until now he is in parts unknown in consequence of his crimes.

This fact shows how suddenly youth may be ruined. It need not consume much time. He need only yield to slight temptations; just listen for a moment to the solicitations of one bad companion, and the ruin is completed. See, too, how slight the cause. He only played cards for pleasure at first. He did not mean to do any more than that. He thought that he was principled against gambling. But, like all youth, he did not know himself. He was not strong enough to overcome the temptation. It was more than a match for him, and he fell.

Now, always bear this in mind. Be guarded against the *tendency* of such things. Because some youth indulge and escape ruin, do not conclude that you shall. Some men have lived in communities where the yellow fever raged, and yet they have escaped it. For that reason you would not rush needlessly into a room where the yellow fever was carrying off its victims. All men and women do not die of cholera in the East, where it is raging now; but who would say that he is not afraid of cholera because some persons escape its fearful havoc?

Precisely so it is with moral evils. You must understand how they contaminate and ruin before one is aware of it. Then only are you safe.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

SYSTEMATIC STUDY.

Oct. 1, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: It is very important for school-boys to adopt a *system* of study and recreation. Of course, your teachers are systematic in the general course of study required, as well as in the recitations of the school-room. It is no less important that the pupils should be systematic in their arrangements.

You have spare moments every day. You have certain hours for certain recitations. You have hours for recreation and hours for study. Now, in just as far as you have the control of your time, devote a certain portion of it to reading, another portion to hard study of regular lessons, and another portion to recreation. Make your rules, and adhere to them with the pertinacity of the Medes and Persians. In this

way you will accomplish far more than you can without system. At first the plan may seem arbitrary ; but you will soon form the habit of being systematic, and find much more pleasure and profit in it than you can in a looser manner of living. The direct tendency of such an arrangement of duties and recreations is to cultivate punctuality, industry, patience, and perseverance, together with other excellent qualities that are found in their company. An interesting fact will illustrate :

Charles G. Frost, Esq., of Brattleborough, Vermont, resolved, at fourteen years of age, to spend one hour each day in study. At that time he had just commenced his trade ; and, of course, the usual hours of toil were occupied with duties to his employer. In order to accomplish his purpose he was obliged to reduce the labors of each day to a rigid system, from which he did not depart. His sleep, his toils, his studies, his reading, all were graduated so as to secure his desired object. Now, mark what he accomplished.

The first book which engaged his attention was Hutton's Mathematics, an English work of

note, and one that furnished a complete mathematical course. For five years this work occupied his attention. One hour each day, at least, was devoted to mastering this difficult science. Having accomplished this study, he next took up mathematical astronomy and mechanics. He selected the most approved authors, English and American, on these subjects, and thoroughly studied them. Next natural philosophy and physical astronomy, followed by chemistry, geology, and mineralogy, were mastered. Also botany, ornithology, entomology, and conchology in turn were studied. In botany he achieved wonders. He made extensive surveys of the trees, shrubs, ferns, mosses, herbs, and lichens of his native state; and not more than two collections of ferns in the whole country excelled the collection which he himself made. He acquired great facility also in reading the Latin language; and his acquaintance with the poets and historical writers, after thirty years of study, at one hour per day, was remarkable.

Of course his library was a collection of the most valuable treatises on the subjects men-

tioned. He said of it: "I have a library which I divide into three departments—scientific, religious, literary—comprising the standard works published in this country, containing five or six hundred volumes. I have purchased these books from time to time, with money saved for the purpose by some small self-denials."

In this fact you discover not only the great advantage of persevering endeavors, but also the benefit of *system*. He could not have accomplished so much without a systematic plan, "a place for everything, and everything in its place." At forty-five years of age he had accomplished the work described, thirty-one years after forming his resolution to study a single hour a day.

It is by such a regard for systematic arrangement that all distinguished scholars have been able to perform so great labors. Martin Luther wrote and published about seven hundred pamphlets and volumes. John Wesley spent much time in traveling from place to place, as an ambassador for Christ, and yet he wrote thirty-two octavo volumes before he was seventy years

of age. Rev. Albert Barnes prepared all his excellent commentaries without interfering with his pastoral duties. He accomplished this herculean labor by so arranging his studies and parish labors that he could have his time before breakfast in which to write his commentaries. These men, in common with many others that might be named, depended largely upon system to enable them to accomplish so much. Cicero said that he produced all his philosophical works without interfering with his duties to the republic, in consequence of the systematic improvement of time. "I have given those hours to them," he said, "which others give to their walks, their repasts, and their pleasures."

Now it is equally important that a school-boy be systematic. Indeed, when we reflect upon the power of habit, it is even more important that boyhood be subjected to this sort of discipline than manhood. If you are not orderly in the arrangement and discharge of your duties now, you never will be. "Now or never" is the decree.

You can but see that in agriculture, mercantile affairs, and the trades, system is necessary

to success. The farmer, blacksmith, carpenter, or shoemaker who labors without "order," brings very little to pass. His work is proof of his shortcomings in this regard. It is precisely so with school-boys ; and for this reason I would have you adopt the suggestions of this letter in the outset. Whatever is left to be done any time may not be done at all. An allotted time for each duty is the only assurance that it will be done, and well done.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.



BAD BOYS IN SCHOOL.

Oct. 5, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: Your letter reached us on Tuesday evening. I think you must have some boys in your school who will not make very good companions. That boy who boasts of his whipping abilities does not possess much other ability. I imagine I never knew such a fellow to be overstocked with brains. Generally this class have about as many brains in their fists as they have in their heads. Besides being ignora-

muses, they have very little principle. They are devoid of all those virtues that win the respect and confidence of others. A boy who will run about boasting of his ability to knock down any other boy of his size and age will do something else that is mean and contemptible. Just as it is with the boy who lies; he will do something else that is as bad as lying. Then what a low aim it is! Boasting of his ability to whip a school-fellow! Taking pride in showing how much strength he has! There would be some sense in being proud of his learning or goodness. If a boy will take pride in being as virtuous as he can, or doing the best that he can in his studies, or being as kind or gentlemanly as he is able, there would be some reason in that. But to glory in his power to knock somebody down; this is loaferish and brutish, and the boy who will do it ought to be shunned as unworthy of companionship. I hope you will keep a respectable distance from him.

Then there is that other boy who has the twenty-nine marks. I have no doubt that he is better than the fighting character named above. Of the two I should choose the latter for an

associate. But this twenty-nine marks fellow has a doleful prospect before him. He might as well begin to stay in by the week. If it takes him half an hour to work off one mark, his play hours are already pretty well used up. You will find that such a boy lacks that energy and force of character which are necessary for success in life. He will make no better clerk or merchant than he does a scholar. He must have a decided taste for marks. He probably likes to see titles attached to a name. Perhaps he will aspire yet for a D.D., or F.R.S., or LL.D., or something of that sort. Unless he changes his course he will have a load of marks to carry all through his life. He will be tardy, shiftless, lazy, and whatever else belongs to a mere human cypher. A boy should try to be somebody. Unless he tries to be a good scholar he will hardly try to be a good farmer or good merchant. It is hardly possible to make an efficient man out of a shiftless boy. As soon think of making a truthful man out of a lying boy. The two boys of whom you speak have not a very bright prospect before them in my judgment. Do not be like them.

I recall a boasting fighting character, who was a schoolmate of mine over thirty years ago. He was good at quarreling, and this was all in which he ever excelled, unless it was in those things that usually go with that propensity, such as swearing, lying, and loafing. I saw him about three years ago in the cars. I had heard about him several times, and I knew that he was a ruined man; but I had not seen him. Three years ago, I say, I had the opportunity to view him from head to foot. He was mean and besotted enough. I found that he was really a bloated drunkard; his face red and blotched, and burned with rum. His nose looked as if it would set a match on fire. I spoke to him, and how ashamed he appeared! He seemed to know that he was mean, and to shrink from the gaze of old acquaintances. But he was just such a man as his pugnacious youth foreshadowed. I was not surprised at all to find that he was a loathsome, ruined man. And there are other boys whom I knew at that time who have even now gone down to the drunkard's grave. Had they been different boys, their manhood would have been different.

I never had a scholar, when I was a teacher, who was reckless of the marks he got, who made much of a man. I frequently meet with young men who were formerly among my scholars; and those of them who are making their marks upon society did not get many marks in school. One of the best scholars I ever had, and perhaps *the* best one, is now a successful business man in Boston. First he was a clerk, and just as good a clerk as he was a scholar; and now he is a partner in the business where he acted as clerk so long. It is not strange he is reaping as he sowed. The boy who sows wild oats at school will gather wild oats only when he becomes a man, and a large crop too.

Always imitate the best boys you can find. The best are none too good; and if you imitate them you will not be likely to go far astray.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

THE DILIGENT SCHOLAR.

Oct. 9, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: I received your letter last evening. You speak of having too much studying; but I think that the number of your studies cannot task you excessively. You have not so many studies as you had at B. You must have considerable time for recreation. Besides, it is best to have your time occupied. Idleness is one of the worst vices there is. Boys learn to do many naughty things when they are idle. Satan has plenty of work for idle hands to do. The idle boys are the boys that get into mischief, and not those whose hands are full of work. Study is your work now. You are preparing to be a man; work is a necessary preparation. Study is work when you are getting ready for manhood.

Boys are apt to long for nothing to do. If they are in school the less study they have to do the better. If they are on the farm, or in the workshop, the fewer hours they are compelled to labor the more they enjoy it. This

is true of many of them. How strange that they should desire what is for their injury ! I would have them provided with recreation ; but I would have them understand the importance of industry and the danger of idleness.

You never knew an idle boy to make a good man. You never knew one of this class to be successful in business. All the successful merchants, mechanics, and professional men were industrious boys who improved their time. Amos Lawrence of Boston, who was one of the noblest men of Massachusetts in his day, was industrious in school and out of school. His biographer says of him : " He did not allow himself to be idle, but from his earliest years exhibited the same spirit of industry which led to success in after life. With a natural quickness of apprehension, and a fondness for books, he made commendable progress in spite of his disadvantages." Mr. Lawrence once wrote to his son : " An idle person, with good powers of mind, becomes torpid and inactive after a few years of indulgence, and is incapable of making any high effort ; highly important it is, then, to

avoid this enemy of mental and moral improvement."

Of five hundred and sixty-nine boys in the Westboro Reform School at one time, four hundred and seventy-two of them were idle lads roaming about the streets. What a commentary upon the Turkish proverb, "The devil tempts all other men, but idle men tempt the devil." This is true in study or manual pursuits. In your school it will be proved true that "idle brains are the devil's workshop." It is in idle hours that all sorts of pranks and capers that disturb a school and corrupt youth are begotten. Remember this. A rogue will prove very good and faithful while he is kept busy. It is when he has nothing to do that his roguery develops more than his mind. A roguish boy usually makes a bright smart man if he be not idle. So there is a chance for you to make a smart man.

Make an estimate. Suppose a boy wastes a single half hour each day in idleness, that is three hours a week for the secular days. Three hours a week is one hundred and fifty-six hours a year, which is equal to twenty-six school days

of study at six hours each. A full month in a year, or one twelfth part of the time, is thus wasted. How much might be accomplished in this time! One year in twelve is lost by this small waste of each day.

The Bible says: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and lo! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well. I looked upon it and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall thy poverty come as one that traveleth, and thy want as an armed man." It is precisely so with the idle boy in school. He wants to lie abed in the morning, crying "A little more sleep, a little more slumber," and his mind is all grown over with thorns, and he brings forth no good fruit; but, like a neglected farm, his whole mental and moral nature runs to weeds, and other people become ashamed of him, if he be not ashamed of himself.

On the other hand, the diligent boy is the

candidate for high honors. Note what the Bible says on this point: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." He shall be somebody, and not grow up to be a mere nobody in society. The history of men all around us proves this.

Think how many and great your opportunities are. Shall you throw away part of them because they are so many? Roger Sherman had little time to study; and so he scratched important lessons on pieces of leather with his awl while at work on his shoemaker's bench. Abraham Lincoln, as I have told you, had no school, and few books on which he could depend for education; but he improved the time that other boys spent in idleness, and you know the result. Abraham Lincoln was made a great man by the spare hours that most boys spend in idle talk and pranks. There is no doubt that he was made of the best material to begin with; but just as good material has been spoiled by idleness. That will spoil anything that is human. The life of Abraham Lincoln proves that a boy becomes a good, great man, not so

much through abundant opportunities, as he does through a few opportunities well improved. Never forget this. Your opportunities are great. Improve them faithfully, and only a few years will elapse before you will occupy a position of honor in business. Better study hard for a time and be somebody hereafter, than to study little and always be nobody.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

HOW TO WRITE LETTERS.

Oct. 12, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: You have been very good to write thus far, and I wish to call your attention to your letters. Letter-writing is really one of the fine arts, and every school-boy ought to strive to be a good letter-writer. We have very few letter-writers, even among adults, who excel. Ministers, merchants, doctors, and lawyers give very little heed to the style or beauty of their correspondence, because they did not cultivate their talents in this line when they were young. When they began to correspond with friends they were careless, and wrote

their letters without regard to the manner of executing them, so that bad composition, bad penmanship, bad punctuation, and bad everything characterized their epistles. It is not strange, therefore, that their letters are wretched things now that they are men. Anything will do for a letter, they think.

Now, I would have you believe that one of the most important things of your future life will be to write letters. No matter what vocation you may choose, you will find that you must write letters. If you are a merchant you will have letters to write every day. Many of these letters will go into the hands of intelligent and educated persons. You will be ashamed to address this class unless you can write a good letter. I heard á merchant say recently that he regretted the non-improvement of his time more in respect to writing letters than almost anything besides. He said that he was frequently obliged to write to persons of refinement, whose letters to him were the finest specimens of the art, and he was ashamed of his own productions. A very intimate acquaintance of mine, a merchant of Boston, fre-

quently corresponds with literary men, as well as with statesmen and governors. Although he went to Boston a poor boy, with all his possessions tied up in a handkerchief, yet he improved his time in such a manner that he will speak and write as gracefully as a liberally educated man. But he has accomplished this by doing everything as well as he could. When he was as old as you are he made *thoroughness* a rule of performing all things. If he wrote a letter, he did it just as well as he could. Then when he wrote another he tried to write better still, making an improvement each time upon his previous efforts. Consequently, when he became a man, he was qualified to write a good letter, and do everything else well. His rule is that old one, "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well."

If you say that you will never be in a position to write to literary men, and great men, then your aim is not high enough. There is no reason why you should not stand as high as the gentleman just named, twenty or twenty-five years hence. Your advantages are far greater than his opportunities were. You ought not

to be satisfied with less than that. If you are a merchant, be the best one that you can, and let your letters be characteristic of your culture and worth.

In writing a letter, then, let your penmanship be as good as you can make it. Take time to write your letters, and they will be written well. In the next place, put the date and place of writing just where they belong. You know where that is, on the upper right corner of the page, in one line. Then place the name of the person addressed one line above the first line of your letter, as you do now. Next attend to your capital letters. You forget sometimes in your haste to begin each new sentence and paragraph and proper name with capitals. Never begin a sentence with a small letter. You know that this is wrong, because your spelling-book gives you the rules. Boys are apt to forget the rules. Practice them, and you will not forget them.

Dot the letter i always. You forget it sometimes. So you sometimes forget to cross the letter t. I must tell you a story about that. A man ordered two monkeys. He spelled the

word *two* erroneously, and did not cross the t, so it looked like 100. The man to whom the order was sent read it as an order for 100 monkeys. He sent all he had, 80, with the word that the other 20 should be forthcoming. Dot each i, and cross your t's, or you may get more monkeys than you want. Two monkeys might do very well, but a hundred is more than one bargains for.

Attend to your punctuation. It will require some thought to tell just when to use a comma, semicolon, colon, or period. But your spelling-book will guide you. There you will find the rules, and it is a capital discipline for you to learn when and how to use them. A man once wrote a book when he did not know how to use the marks of punctuation, so he did not use any through the book. But at the end of the volume he put several pages of punctuation marks, and invited his readers to use them at their pleasure. Perhaps you will write a book at some future day. I hope you will be able to punctuate its pages correctly. But more upon this subject of punctuation at *a future* time.

When you have completed your letter, sign your name underneath to the right, saying,

Yours truly, fraternally, affectionately, or obt. servt., according to the person addressed; the most affectionate term being selected for the nearest relatives and friends. To the left of the closing page, a little below your name, write the name of the person addressed, prefixing his name with his title of Hon., or Rev., or Dr., or plain Mr., as the case may be. Having written and enclosed your letter in an envelope, superscribe it in your best style, making the name of the town close even with the name of the person, and the name of the state even with that of the town. Observe these rules and you will write a good letter; and in time, by practice, it will be as easy to write a good one as a poor one.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

BOYS SHOULD REMEMBER THEIR MOTHER.

Oct. 16, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: I was glad that you wrote that loving letter to your mother. Many boys forget their mothers. I should rather you would for-

get your father. I have noticed, in reading biography, that boys who became wild and profligate did not appear to love their mothers. On the other hand, I have noticed that great and good men always thought much of their mothers. They seemed to recognize that they owed a debt of gratitude to them for watching over and guiding them in their tender years. I feel that I owe more to my mother than I do to all other persons together. Her care, instructions, example, and prayers did more to make me what I am than all other things combined. And the longer I live the more I am impressed with this truth.

I have just been reading about soldiers and their mothers. A soldier was dying. The chaplain said to him,

“Are your father and mother living?”

“Mother is,” he replied.

“Is she a Christian?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you think that she prays for you?”

He looked up earnestly, and said, “Chaplain, I *know* that she prays for me.”

“Do you love Jesus?”

"I have never yet been able to love Christ." He became a Christian soon after.

It is a good sign to see a boy love his mother, and show plainly to the world that he does. Some boys think that it is manly to appear to be regardless of a mother's feelings; but they are much mistaken. It is meanness to exhibit this feeling. Only those boys who think it is manly to smoke and swear cherish such an idea. Roughts and rowdies may think so, but no refined, gentlemanly boys will.

John Quincy Adams once said of his mother: "It is due to gratitude and nature that I should acknowledge and avow that such as I have been, whatever it was, such as I am, whatever it is, and such as I hope to be in all futurity, must be ascribed, under Providence, to the precepts and example of my mother."

If so great a man as John Quincy Adams could thus think and speak of his mother, without compromising his dignity or tarnishing his fame, then I think that a boy need not fear the consequences of appearing to think much of his mother. The fact is, every-

body respects John Quincy Adams all the more because he thus loved and honored his mother. And precisely so it is with the boy who manifests a kindred filial regard. He commands the respect of all who know him. He is just the boy to make his mark. The merchant who wants a clerk would employ him in preference to the boy who treats his mother with neglect. The teacher would prefer him to other boys in his school. The father would select him for an associate for his son; and so on. Scarcely a person could be found who would not select him in preference to a boy of the opposite character.

The Greeks and Romans used to dedicate magnificent temples to those who signally honored their mothers. The Turks honored mothers more than they did wives. They said, "Wives may die, and we can replace them; children perish, and others may be born to us; but who shall restore the mother when she passes and is seen no more?" Gustavus III., King of Sweden, rewarded a poor peasant girl, toiling to support her crippled mother, "by settling a pension for life upon the mother,

with the reversion to her daughter at her death."

Epaminondas was one of the greatest generals which Greece ever produced; and when the nation was honoring him in the proudest manner, he said that he derived more satisfaction from the pleasure which his victories afforded to his father and mother, than he did from all the displays of national respect and gratitude around him. "And for this expression of regard for his parents the historian has assigned to him one of the brightest pages of history."

I might fill many pages with similar facts of great and good men, were it necessary; but it is not.

An Eastern mother was about to start upon a long journey, when she invited her three sons to furnish her with some token of their love. One of them presented her with a marble tablet, having her name inscribed upon it. Another brought her a large and beautiful bouquet. The third thus addressed her: "Mother, I have neither marble tablet nor fragrant nosegay, but I have a *heart*; here your name is engraved, here your memory is precious; and this heart,

full of affection, will follow you wherever you travel, and remain with you wherever you repose." Which present do you suppose was the more acceptable? There can be but one decision. You can learn a lesson from it.

I have not spoken yet of the brightest of all examples in this respect. The best being that ever walked this earth set an example of tender interest in his mother, which all sons might imitate to their advantage. Jesus Christ loved his mother, and he ever manifested that love without fear of derision. The last thing he did upon the cross was to provide for her future happiness. He committed her to the care of a beloved disciple with the tender love of a son, and his character shines all the brighter for the act. If Christ thus regarded his mother, boys of the present day may not fear that they shall appear weak and feminine if they cherish their mothers.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

THE BIBLE FOR THE SCHOOL-BOY.

Oct. 20, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: When you left home I asked you to read a chapter in the Bible daily, and now I will give you my reasons for the request.

The Bible is the best book in the world. Even infidels dare not pronounce its teachings unimportant or useless. I once knew an infidel who had a large family of children, and he was very careful to send them all to the Sabbath-school. A neighbor thought that he was inconsistent and insincere; but he replied, "The Bible is the best book ever written. I do not believe that it is the word of God, but it is the best word of *man* that was ever penned. If my children will follow its teachings, I know that they will grow up to be good men and women. I desire to have their characters moulded by it." He was the most sensible infidel of whom I have ever read or heard. If you follow the counsels of this Book of books, I know that you will make a good man.

Look at good and great men. All of them were indebted to the Bible more than to any other book for their characters and position. John Quincy Adams, who was once President of the United States, said : " So great is my veneration for the Bible, and so strong my belief that, when duly read and meditated on, it is of all books in the world that which contributes most to make men good, wise, and happy ; that the earlier my children begin to read it, the more steadily they pursue the practice of reading it throughout their lives, the more lively and confident will be my hopes that they will prove useful citizens to their country, respectable members of society, and a real blessing to their parents." His life and character was substantial proof of the truthfulness of his words. I have spoken to you twice already of the noble career of Abraham Lincoln. The Bible was the chief book upon which his parents depended to mould his character. That transparent honesty for which he was distinguished, and all those other virtuous and noble qualities that won the hearts of the American people, yes, and of the people of other countries, would not have adorned his

life but for the instructions of the word of God.

Such examples you should not disregard. The boy who thinks that he can get along and prosper without the Bible, must be both ignorant and thoughtless. Such a boy generally makes shipwreck of his character and hopes. Go into a city or large town, where there are many ruined young men, and you will find that nearly all of them disregard the Bible. They did not read nor value it. They said, "We will have nothing to do with that book;" and so they were ruined for want of its instructions. This is the sad story of thousands of youth.

Everybody thinks more favorably of the boy who reveres the Bible. I might cite a multitude of cases to prove the truth of this remark. I will cite but one.

"Please, sir, *don't* you want a cabin-boy?" inquired a lad of a shipmaster.

"I *do* want a cabin-boy, my lad, but what is that to you? A little chap like you aint fit for the berth."

"O, sir, I'm real strong. I can do a great deal of work if I aint so very old."

“But what are you here for? you don’t look like a city boy. Run away from home, eh?”

“O no, indeed, sir; my father died, and my mother is very poor, and I want to do something to help her. She let me come.”

“Well, sonny, where are your letters of recommendation? Can’t take any boy without those.”

The boy had not thought of recommendations. He might have brought letters from almost any of his neighbors. His minister or his Sabbath-school teacher would have given him a good one. But he did not stop to think that such a letter would be required.

However, he thought of his Bible in his pocket. Perhaps that would do, as it was a present from his Sabbath-school teacher, and it had a recommendation of the best kind on the fly-leaf. So he handed his Bible to the shipmaster. He opened it, and read the following on the first blank leaf:

“Willie Graham. Presented as a reward for regular and punctual attendance at Sabbath-school, and for his blameless conduct there and elsewhere. From his Sunday-school teacher.”

The captain's heart was touched, and he loved the boy at once. "You are the boy for me!" he exclaimed. "You shall sail with me; and if you are as good a lad as I think you are, your pockets shant be empty when you go back to your good mother."

Now the captain thought more of that boy because he loved the Bible than he would have done had he brought only letters from the minister and selectmen. And so do you think more of him. Everybody thinks more of him. It is always a recommendation to a person to love the Bible. The merchant would choose such a boy for his store in preference to one of the opposite character. So would the mechanic or farmer. Parents would prefer such a one to associate with their sons. They distrust and fear the influence of boys who sneer at the Bible.

Whatever calling you may pursue, I hope that you mean to be the best youth and man that you can be therein. He who does not mean to do as well as he can is not worthy of a very good place. But remember that the Bible will help you to become the best in your place. It can make you now the best behaved boy in

school, the most amiable and trusty playmate, the most obedient son, and the truest and happiest youth to be found. You can never become a true man without the Bible.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.



THE CLAIMS OF RELIGION UPON HIM.

Oct. 25, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: I am all alone in the house to-night, as your mother was sent for to-day to see your grandmother, who is very near death. When death comes so near home, we seem to be admonished more solemnly about being prepared ourselves for an exchange of worlds; and I feel more like speaking to you now in respect to religion, which I had designed to do after calling your attention to another subject. But now that I feel particularly like penning my thoughts upon this theme, I will do it to-night.

In this world we are to prepare for another. He who thinks that he has nothing to do with the future world, toward which he is hastening, has very incorrect ideas of life. The time we

live here is very brief in comparison with the time we shall live hereafter. TIME and ETERNITY! These are the two words that express the length of the life here and the life hereafter. One is short and rapid, the other is endless. I need not say which is the more important. You can readily see.

Now, religion is the necessary preparation for that endless life. It is indispensable also for this life. He who is prepared to die is prepared to live, so that a preparation for death becomes also a preparation for life. This is one of the beauties of religion.

Youth are apt to think that they need religion only to die by, so that they can disregard its claims for the present, and be light, and frivolous, and thoughtless in early life. This is a great error. They need religion to live by full as much as they do to die by. It is certain that if they live well they will die happy. They need to be anxious only about living, as dying will take its complexion from the manner of living. A person can live better in any calling or position in life with religion than he can without it. He will be a better boy and a

better man ; a better citizen, father, son, brother, or friend. In all these relations, too, he needs it.

Religion is not for old people alone, as many young people suppose. It is more attractive and beautiful to contemplate in the young than it is in the old. Joseph and Samuel are among the most charming characters in the Bible. A boy who is like them now is equally winning.

You are old enough to be an intelligent, active Christian now ; and this is your first duty. I should much rather you would be a true Christian man than rich or learned. You may be both. Religion does not forbid the possession of wealth or knowledge. On the other hand it finds abundant use for them. A truly religious man is the one who ought to be rich, for he will use his riches so as to do great good. The irreligious man seldom if ever does good with his money. So it is with learning, and every other acquisition.

Neither will religion cut off all your sources of pleasure. It will allow you every innocent pleasure ; and you will enjoy them all the more because you love God, and use them

with a high Christian aim. Boys are apt to think that religion is a solemn affair, and they shall never be happy again if they become religious. This is a grave error. A person never really begins to be happy until he begins to serve God aright. There is more real happiness in being good and useful than there is in being any or all things else.

Oct. 26. I did not complete my letter last night as I was interrupted, and so I will finish it to-night. Your mother has not yet returned, and so I conclude that your grandmother is still alive. I shall only add that neither you nor any one else can die happily without religion. Many people think that they can die bravely without religion. I have seen many such ; but I have never seen one irreligious person, young or old, peaceful on a death-bed. Death is the king of terrors to those who are unprepared to meet him. I remember a woman in my parish—a young woman of intelligence and decision. She was declining with consumption, and I called to see her. She told me that she could die calmly without religion ; that she did not want to embrace such a delusion. I replied,

“You cannot meet death in peace. No! you cannot meet death without fear and trembling, as you are. You will find that what I say is true.”

She still persisted in saying that she was as much prepared to die as she wanted to be, and that she had no fears. I left her in this frame of mind. Early one morning, about a week after this interview, a neighbor came to my door in haste, saying that Miss —— desired to see me as soon as possible.

I went immediately to see her. As soon as I entered her room she burst into tears, and exclaimed, “I cannot die so! I cannot die so!”

“Then you have found that you cannot die in peace without religion,” I said.

“Yes! I can’t die so! I can’t die so!” was her response. And it was not till she became a Christian that she was prepared to meet death with composure.

So it is with almost every person. So it will be with you. You will need religion in the hour of death just as much as she did, and for that reason I would have you possess it now.

Peculiar promises are given to the young in the Bible. The young are encouraged to believe in Christ, as the old are not. "They that seek me early shall find me." It would be a happy moment for me to hear that you had become a Christian. Then I should feel that you have not only a preparation for death, but a preparation for life; and that you have a safeguard against the evils and temptations that surround the young in this world. It is my daily prayer that you may remember your Creator in the days of your youth, for then you are prepared for life or death.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

SPENDING MONEY.

Nov. 1, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: Your letter came to-night. I did not get time to write on Monday evening as usual, and so I write to-night. You must not forget to keep a faithful account of your expenses, and in your next letter let me know what you spent in October, giving the items for

which you paid your money. It is a capital plan to keep such an account, as it will aid to prevent extravagance. When boys spend a cent here and there, they do not stop to consider how much the sum total is for a month or a year. They would often be surprised to see the footing up from time to time. One or two cents at a time does not appear to be much, but in the aggregate it may not be a small amount. Now, to have the account before your eyes to examine from time to time, tends to stop extravagance, by showing precisely what you have spent, and how and when you spent it.

Boys do not stop to think that SPENDING MONEY has much to do with their future characters and destiny; but it has. Many a boy has been ruined by spending his coppers for candy, nuts, etc., to gratify his palate. He has thus formed the habits of a spendthrift in early life, by which his manhood was ruined. A spendthrift never amounts to anything in society, even when he does not become a nuisance or pest. Remember what Dr. Franklin said, that "a penny saved is as good as a penny earned." It may be even better than this; for the useless

spending of the pennies may lay the foundation of wasteful, extravagant habits. Dr. Franklin was a wise man, and an observing one too. He had been a boy once, and paid "too dear for a whistle." And yet he was wise because he saw that he paid too much for the whistle, and profited by the lesson through his whole life. He uttered many valuable sayings on this subject: "A pin a day is a groat a year." Only save to the value of a pin a day, and it amounts to quite a sum in a series of years. "A small leak will sink a ship," was another of his maxims. Many a man has been ruined pecuniarily because of his failure to take care of the littles. As a great ship will sink in time though it has but a small leak, so a man of considerable means will come to want unless he be economical.

Amos Lawrence, of whom I have spoken before, once wrote of his early life, "I have many things to reproach myself with, but among them is not idling away my time, *or spending my money for such things as are improper.*"

This distinguished merchant presented his

youngest son, twelve years old, with a pocket account-book, and on the fly-leaf the following counsel was penned :

“MY DEAR SON: I give you this little book, that you may write in it how much money you receive, and how you use it. It is of much importance in forming your early character, to have correct habits, and a strict regard to truth in all you do. For this purpose I advise you never to cheat yourself by making a false entry in this book. If you spend money for an object you would not willingly have known, you will be more likely to avoid doing the same thing again if you call it by the right name here, remembering always that there is *One* who cannot be deceived, and that *He* requires children to render an account of all their doings at last. I pray God so to guide and direct you, that when your stewardship here is ended he may say to you that the talents intrusted to your care have been faithfully employed.

“Your affectionate father, A. L.”

In 1822 he received a lad from Connecticut into his store, and he made the following

suggestions to his father in a letter: "Will it not be well for him to furnish you, at stated periods, an exact account of his expenditures? The habit of keeping such an account will be serviceable; and if he be prudent, the satisfaction will be great, ten years hence, in looking back and observing the process by which his character has been formed."

This youth subsequently became a partner of Mr. Lawrence.

At another time he wrote to a son concerning his grandchildren: "This simple rule of making a child, after he is twelve years old, keep an account of all that he wears, uses, or expends, in any and every way, would save more suffering to families than can fairly be estimated by those who have not observed the operation."

You commenced this method of accounting for your spending money before you were twelve years old, so that you ought certainly to reap the above reward from the excellent practice.

You remember that Samuel Budgett, the great English merchant, obtained his first cent by the sale of a horse-shoe which he found in

the street. Instead of spending it for candy or nuts, as a multitude of boys would have done, he laid it by, and soon he had another to put with it. The first one was lonesome and wanted company, and he was not long in finding several companions for it. He became a rich man. He gave away several hundred thousand dollars while he lived, and when he died he left several hundred thousand more. He was so well satisfied that frugality was an element of success that he insisted upon it in his clerks. He taught them to pick up all the old nails about his premises, and one of the boys straitened them for use. He would correct a boy for using more twine than was necessary in making up parcels. Also the boy who made paper bags for the store was instructed how to cut them without wasting paper. I dare say his clerks called him a stingy, niggardly man, because they did not see the difference between proper economy and penuriousness. But, then, they all owed much to this kind of discipline which they received at his hands. They made better men for it, and were more successful business men, I have no doubt.

Now suppose a boy should spend one cent a day for confectionary, Sundays excepted. This would amount to six cents a week, and three dollars twelve cents in a year. For ten years it would amount to thirty-one dollars and twenty cents. This is worth saving. How much boys, great and small, through the land, spend in this way, you can understand by thinking that several million dollars' worth of confectionary are manufactured and sold in this country every year. I believe that boys and girls buy the larger part of it.

You never knew a man to become wealthy unless he was economical from his earliest boyhood. The early lives of all the distinguished merchants of whom you have read were characterized by this quality. They could never have become what they did without it.

Yes, it will make a vast difference with your future character how you spend your small sums of money now. When Budgett had laid up twenty-five cents he spent it all at once for "Wesley's Hymns;" and this was well enough. What he bought was proof of good thoughts and aspirations in his soul. If he had spent

the whole of his money for confectionary, or to attend the theater, it would have indicated something wrong in him. If he had given it all away to a poor man it would have denoted a really promising element of character.

Be careful, then, how you spend your money. I would not have you be niggardly and penurious. No one can admire those qualities. But I would have you remember that the manner of spending your money will make or mar your character.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

P. S. You have said nothing about my letters, whether you like them or not. I hope you read them carefully, and remember their counsels. You say that the boy who gloried in his fists has run away. I told you that there was something bad about him. I guess his legs are the best part of him.

LEISURE MOMENTS AND READING.

Nov. 7, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: I suppose that you get some time for reading, notwithstanding that your studies occupy your thoughts so fully. I want to say a word about your reading. Boys are not always sufficiently careful about what they read. Many choose fiction in preference to fact, and delight more in comic pieces and illustrated papers than they do in solid, useful reading. They love stories more than they do plain, matter-of-fact reading.

What is the object of reading? Answer this question, and you will see at once what your reading should be. It is not for amusement, fun, or for killing time, that you read. It is to improve your mind, and store it with useful knowledge. Hence, biography, history, travels, are among the most useful subjects for reading, aside from religious themes, that can demand your attention. A boy who is denied the advantages of good schools and teachers, may nevertheless become intelligent, and even famed

for his knowledge, by a course of useful reading. Let him have access to a good library, where he can find a plenty of books of the kind mentioned, and the improvement of his spare hours alone will make him a man of refinement and education. In this way many men have qualified themselves to occupy positions of high trust and honor. This is true, in a great measure, of General Banks, Henry Wilson, ex-Governor Boutwell, and many other living men whom I might name. Not one of them wasted time in reading novels, comic books or papers, or light, meaningless stories. They selected good books, and read a little every day, even though they could find but a few moments at a time to employ in this way. They were wont to keep a useful book by them, and whenever a spare moment offered the book was read with avidity. You know that General Banks carried a book in his pocket in his boyhood and youth, and his spare moments were employed in perusing its pages. In this way he treasured up a great deal of knowledge that served him a good purpose when he became a man.

On the other hand, there are a great many

unsubstantial men, who are light and trifling in their views and manners, usefulness being the last thing of which they seemingly think, and the reason of their lightness is found in the books they read in early life, if they read at all. They read novels, or sickening love stories, or something of the kind, that amused without instructing them. I do not mean that this is the only reason of their defective characters; but it is one of the reasons, nor is it an unimportant one.

You can see this fact illustrated among boys now. Those who care little or nothing about reading unless they can have the "Budget of Fun," differ very much from those who read history, biography, and travels. The difference is seen in their conversation, their manners, their choice of companions, their general demeanor. There is little or no dignity about them, and they appear to have very little conception of the realities of life.

Readers of light trash, commonly called yellow-covered literature, are usually fond of parties of pleasure and balls, and they love to play whist and other games better than they

love work. They are never so happy as when they are engaged in frolic. Some of them become unprincipled, and behave in a manner that reflects no credit upon themselves or their guardians. Boys that love good reading are seldom found among the idle and vicious. It would not be difficult to pick out such boys from the crowd in almost any community.

Make up your mind, then, to read only good papers and books. What time you have to spare for reading, let it be improved by familiarity with the best volumes. Love stories, tales of imaginary adventure, such as Mayne Reid writes, and the "Book of Wonders," and "Book of Shipwrecks," are abominable. I knew a case where a young man took the lives of an aged couple in order to secure their money. According to his own confession he had read books like these last mentioned, and through these he was led to plot a foul murder for the sake of gain. Never read such a book. It will only do you injury.

If you look around you will find a great difference among your friends and acquaintances in their amount of intelligence. There is a farmer,

a hard-working man, who is one of the first men in town. He is a town officer, and has represented the town in general court. There is a young man who is one of the best debaters in the lyceum, and he is regarded as superior to most of the young men around him. There is Mr. A., the mechanic, and Mr. B., the artist, who take the lead of affairs in town because of their culture. There are certain ladies, also, who are far superior to all the ladies around them, and they take the lead in sewing-circles, benevolent societies, prayer-meetings, etc. Now these persons have all been *readers*. They may not have enjoyed extra advantages in the schools; but they loved to read, and they have improved their spare moments by reading for years.

Amos Lawrence, to whom I have referred before, and to whom I love to refer, related the following interesting bit of his personal history. When he first went to Boston to live, he arranged with the widow with whom he boarded, "that after supper all the boarders who remained in the public room should remain quiet at least for one hour, to give those who chose to study or read an opportunity of doing so without dis-

turbance. The consequence was that we had the most quiet and improving set of young men in the town. The few who did not wish to comply with the regulation went abroad after tea, sometimes to the theater, sometimes to other place, but, *to a man, became bankrupt in after life, not only in fortune, but in reputation*; while a majority of the other class sustained good characters, and some are now living who are ornaments to society, and fill important stations."

This fact is worth remembering. If you should read only ten pages of history per day for twenty years, you would read in that period some seventy-five thousand pages, equal to about one hundred and eighteen large duodecimo volumes.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

P. S. Your report of spending money for the month is very satisfactory, as I expected that it would be. This is one of the good uses to which to put your diary. Keep a faithful account of all your expenses, and report each month. It will form in you one of the best

habits of life. Let every penny that goes give a good account of itself, and the results will verify the truth of all that I have written.

DIFFERENCE OF BOYS IN ATTACHMENT TO TEACHERS.

Nov. 16, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: I was not able to write last week, on account of having so much to do. You write about the runaway boy, and it seems that some other boys are not all that they should be. I have been thinking of the boys who were once pupils of mine, and I cannot recall a single disobedient, idle, indolent pupil who has accomplished anything, or who is anybody now. I have in mind one who was fifteen or sixteen years of age when he went to school to me. He was an idle, shiftless fellow, always behind his class, tardy at school, absent when he could possibly be, and, of course, never prepared for an examination. He is now a married man, and his wife's father has been obliged to take her and the children home at different times to care for them. He has worked

just as he studied; that is, he has labored as little as possible, because he is so consummately lazy. With all the rest he has been intemperate, and reports about his character for uprightness and purity have not been flattering. He makes just such a man as he was a boy.

On the other hand, I have in mind one who was about the same age, but of precisely the opposite character in school. He loved his books. He was a boy of principle. He was truthful, obedient, and faithful. He never went into his class with a poor lesson. He never bragged, swore, or played the rowdy. He was a gentleman in his demeanor at all times and in all places. Visitors to the school frequently were attracted by his gentlemanly bearing, always by his excellent lessons. He never asked to be excused from discharging a duty assigned him, as writing a composition, declaiming, drawing a map, or anything of the kind—never. Now this young man is a successful wholesale merchant in a large city, possessing a character that is a passport to any circle however select. Indeed, he is one of a firm which he served for a series of years as

clerk. He was so faithful in this relation that the firm offered him a position in the mercantile house. They knew by his fidelity in a clerkship that he would be a model partner.

These two boys have not disappointed me. The first one has made no meaner man than I thought he would make. The second is no better man than I expected he would become. As they were in boyhood, so they are in manhood.

Look around you in school and note the characters of the boys—the very bad boys and the very good boys. Remember what I say about them. You can tell what kind of men they will make. Those of them who make the teachers trouble, and who study more to evade a duty than they do to improve their minds, will come out at the little end of the horn, and you know what end that is.

I hope that you will bear this in mind, never forgetting that the higher you rise in school the better position you will probably occupy when you are a man. I should rather bury you than to have you grow up to be like the first-named scholar.

Then, again, scholars always ought to desire

to secure the love of their teachers. I had a class of scholars in my teaching days whom I always love to meet. They are filling different offices; and here and there I meet them now, and their faces are always pleasant. It is because they never gave me trouble, but always tried to please me. They never shirked their duties. A boy who will shirk duty in school will do something else that is wrong. He will generally deceive, and perhaps lie, in order to aid his shirking propensity. The class to which I allude were wholly free from this fault. I shall always delight to meet them as long as I live. I shall always be pleased to welcome them to my house. Every teacher feels this.

But I do not feel thus toward bad boys, who violated my rules of school, and sought to have their own way as much as possible. Once in a while I meet one of this class, but I do not care to see him. I shake his hand rather coldly. I do not tell him that I am very happy to see him, for I should tell a lie if I did. It is hard work to talk with him. I have no love in my heart for him, because he did not win a place in my heart in his boyhood.

A boy who has no desire to win the approbation of his teachers is not much of a boy. I don't envy him this quality of his character.

I hope you will keep these things in mind. I do not speak of them because you need such remarks, but because I hope that you never will. Bearing in mind these thoughts, I am sure that you will continue to be a good scholar, and seek to please your teachers always. I should be sorry to hear anything else from you. There is such a connection between a model boy in the school-room and a model man in Church or State, that I should tremble to learn that you gave your teachers trouble.

As I have said before, it is not well to have much to do with boys who are not obedient scholars. Beware of their influence and example. Associate with them no more than you can help. Let your own conduct rebuke and shame them. The consciousness of having performed your part well in school-days will be a rich reward for all the attention it costs you now.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

PERSEVERANCE, OR THE I CANS AND I CAN'TS.

Nov. 22, 1865.

MY DEAR SON : Boys at school are very apt to meet with difficulties that try their patience and pluck. Long lessons, hard lessons, and many lessons provoke their noblest resolutions, or set them to fretting and complaining about the drudgery of school-days. Alas ! that so many of them cower before these difficulties, and say, "I can't." School-boys are divided into two classes, the I CANS and the I CAN'TS. I need not say which class are the best scholars, and which make the noblest men. An *I can't* boy never succeeds in life. Whatever calling he may select, his *I can't* disposition causes him to make a failure of it. And it is just as true that the *I can* boy will triumph over every obstacle and make his mark in manhood. In the late bloody strife of our land those generals only succeeded, and won laurels for their brows, who were patient and persevering, and cowered not in the face of danger and difficulties. What a bright example we find in

General Grant. He was just such a man as he was a boy—he never “gave up beat” to a lesson or a job of work. Let us look at his boyhood.

When he was only seven or eight years old he asked a companion at school, “What does *I can’t* mean?” He found the phrase in his lesson, and he turned to the dictionary to learn the meaning of it; but he could not find it in the dictionary. He could find *cannot*; but *I can’t* was not there. In his dilemma he applied to a companion in the seat for assistance. He asked his young associate to help him out of his difficulty, but it was all to no purpose. The boy could not relieve him. So he went to his teacher.

“What does *I can’t* mean? It is not in the dictionary,” he said.

The teacher assured him that it was not to be found in the dictionary, and added, “I am glad that it is not there.” Then he embraced the opportunity to lecture the whole school upon the value of perseverance, which is simply saying *I can* with a will, and then acting accordingly. It was a good lesson for Ulysses; he never forgot it. He resolved that *I can’t*

should never be found in his dictionary, and it never was. Four years later his father sent him into the woods with the team for some logs. The hired men were to meet him there and load the logs. For some reason, however, the hired men failed to appear. If Ulysses had been like many boys he would have turned the team about and gone home without the logs. But he went for the logs, and the logs he would have. But how could he load them? "Where there's a will there's a way." He saw a tree fallen over and lodged against another tree, its trunk forming an inclined plane. He concluded to draw the logs to that, and slide their butts up that inclined plane by hitching the oxen to them, and then he could back up his wagon and draw them into it with his team. That was as well planned as a campaign; and he executed it, because he never said *I can't*. He loaded the logs, and drew them home.

About thirty years after that triumph over the logs his country told him to go to Richmond. He would find something worse than logs to load there. He was General Grant then. Other generals had tried to capture Richmond,

and failed. *I can't* was in their dictionary. General Grant undertook the work as he loaded the logs, and you remember how well he succeeded. If he did not take the rebel capital in exactly the way which he first planned he nevertheless captured it, and planted the old flag there.

Now, boys need the same patience, perseverance, and resolution, in kind, in order to make the most of school-days. How many of them have quailed before the request of their teacher to write a composition! *I can't*, say a score of them at once. That difficult problem over which a whole class have puzzled their brains, how many *I can't's* have been uttered over it! I need not specify cases; you know how it is. Now, I repeat, *I can* is the principle on which every boy should act in school. Even if he be sometimes obliged to yield to difficulties, and is compelled to solicit the aid of his teacher, he will make a stronger, better, nobler man by adopting the *I can* theory in the outset. I have read of a boy who had just learned to read at school. Of course he could not read very well, and hard names he could

not pronounce. One day he was reading the Bible, and he came to the hard names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He tried to pronounce them after the teacher, but failed, gave up, and cried. The teacher told him that he might pass over them, and this rejoiced his heart. It was not long, however, before the teacher purposely had the same reading lesson again, in order that he might try his pupil. The little fellow read along very well until he came to the aforesaid proper names again, when, with a discouraged, faint-hearted look, and a sniveling voice, he said, "*Teacher, there's them three fellers again.*" I have no doubt that his teacher gave him up then as a hopeless case, so far as perseverance relates. If he had persevered with the difficult names until he could have pronounced them clearly and correctly, it would have foreshadowed triumph over all obstacles in his whole life career.

The lesson of these facts is obvious. He who runs may read. Scores of similar facts might be added from the lives of good and great men. The *I can't* class never succeed. The *I cans* always make their mark. May you treat *I*

can't as General Grant did the rebels ; that is, conquer it as an outlaw and traitor. Show it no quarter in school. Compel it to surrender, and run up the beautiful flag *I can*.

I have just met with the following lines, which you can commit to memory :

One step, and then another,
And the longest walk is ended ;
One stitch and then another,
And the largest rent is mended.

One brick upon another,
And the highest wall is made ;
One flake upon another,
And the deepest snow is laid.

So the little coral workers,
By their slow and constant motion,
Have built their pretty islands
In the distant, dark blue ocean.

And the noblest undertakings
Man's wisdom hath conceived,
By oft-repeated efforts
Have been patiently achieved.

Then do not look disheartened
O'er the work you have to do,
And say, such a mighty task
You never can get through.

But just endeavor, day by day,
Another point to gain,
And soon the mountain that you feared
Will prove to be a plain.

"Rome was not builded in a day,"
The ancient proverb teaches,
And nature, by her trees and flowers,
The same sweet sermon preaches.

Think not of far-off duties,
But of duties that are near;
And having once begun to work,
Resolve to persevere.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

CHARACTER IN LITTLE THINGS.

Dec. 1, 1865.

MY DEAR SON: I have called your attention to your companions at school, and endeavored to point out some of the dangers that attend indiscriminate companionships. There is no one matter in which the advantage of observing little things is so apparent as in judging of the characters of associates. Boys, like men, exhibit their real characters by trifles. By observing the spirit and temper of their minds, both in the school-room and in the play-ground, you can tell much about their true characters. Let me illustrate what I mean by two or three facts.

The other day I read of one of our soldier-boys who lost his life in one of the battles of Tennessee. A ball penetrated his mouth, and cut off his tongue. A fellow-soldier found him leaning against a tree, nearly dead. He motioned to his comrade to assist him, and made signs for pencil and paper. The latter hastily tore a leaf from his note-book, and passing it with a pencil to the dying young man, the latter wrote :

“Dear father, I am dying; meet me in heav—”

Here the pencil dropped from his hand, and he soon expired. But from this unfinished letter we learn much of the patriot boy. It is a key to his character. We feel satisfied that he was a Christian youth, whose mother was already in heaven, and whose father was awaiting his summons to go up higher.

Here is another fact. Once the bridge of Verona was carried away, with the exception of the center arch, on which was a dwelling occupied by a family. Members of the family gazed affrighted from the windows, and besought the people to send them deliverance.

Count Spolverini stood by, and said, "I will give a hundred French louis to any person who will venture to deliver these unfortunate people." A young peasant sprang from the excited crowd, leaped into a boat, and pushed for the pier, which he reached safely. Taking the family on board, he made for the shore with heroic fortitude, and saved the whole household. "Here is your money, my brave fellow," exclaimed the count. "By no means," responded the peasant. "I do not sell my life; give the money to this poor family, who have need of it." Who does not admire the spirit of the noble peasant. Without any further acquaintance with his character, you feel satisfied that he possessed other excellent qualities. Beneath his peasant's garb a great soul tabernacled, that might have put to the blush that of the wealthy count himself.

Now, it is a very little part of the men's lives that either of the acts named constitutes, and yet they reveal much of the character of the two parties. They illustrate how much we may learn about a person from a single incident.

True, it is on a much smaller scale that you judge of your associates at school. The incidents of the school-room and the play-ground are more trivial, perhaps, in themselves considered; and yet they may exert quite as much influence upon the future life. Dr. Franklin once said of winning the confidence of men, "The most trifling actions that affect a man's credit are to be regarded. The sound of your hammer at five in the morning, or nine at night, heard by a creditor, makes him easy six months longer; but if he sees you at a billiard table, or hears your voice at a tavern, when you should be at work, he sends for his money the next day, and demands it, before he can receive it, in a lump." You see that it is a very trifling matter, in itself considered, that wins or breaks confidence. I am reminded of a distinguished French banker, who, when he was a boy, called upon a merchant to inquire for employment. He was informed that no additional help was needed in the establishment. As the boy turned to go out he espied a pin upon the floor, and stooped down and picked it up. The merchant observed the act, and it was to him a key to

the boy's character. "Not many boys would do that," he said; and he regarded it as evidence of an uncommon boy, and he called him back. After further conversation with him he decided to give him a place in his store. That boy became one of the most famous bankers of France. Picking up a pin made his fortune; and if such an act is not a small affair, what is?

You know that Galileo discovered the most correct method of the measurement of time, by observing the oscillations of a clock in the Temple of Pisa. Prince Rupert invented the method of engraving called mezzotinto, and he was led to make the invention by observing a soldier rubbing the rust from his musket. Is it strange, then, that we can learn so much of men from a small affair, when such trivial circumstances have led to the most important discoveries?

Dr. Arnold was one of the most successful teachers who ever lived, and he was accustomed to set his teachers to watch his pupils at their sports, in order to learn their characters from the most trifling occurrences. If his teachers could do this, then his most observing pupils

could learn much about companions from kindred acts. He always selected teachers who could "understand boys." I think that boys can understand each other, with a little observation, so as not to be drawn into evil paths by one another. Suppose you try this new branch of study a while. Like a boy whom I knew, you may think you have studies enough. He boarded with his teacher, and tomatoes were served one day. The boy declined to eat them, saying that he did not love them. "But you must learn to love them," replied the teacher; "everybody has to learn to love them." "I thank you, sir," answered the boy, "I have as many studies as I can attend to." I think, however, that here is a more profitable study than learning to eat-tomatoes, and it will require more application to master it; and application is what we need in every pursuit. The Irishman was right in his reply about sleeping. He was twitted about sleeping so soundly, when he replied, "When I slape, sir, I attend to my business." That is the way to do all things.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

P. S. Your grandmother is better, and the physicians express decided hope of her recovery. She has been very low indeed; but she is now rallying much faster than could have been expected. You will see her again, doubtless; but her restoration will not render the thoughts which I penned to you about death unimportant.

GOOD SPELLING AND READING.

Jan. 7, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: When pupils commence the higher branches of study they are quite inclined to despise the fundamental branches, like reading and spelling. They often possess a strong desire, also, to advance to the higher and more difficult studies at once, without bestowing half the attention required upon any one of them. This makes them imperfect and superficial scholars.

Spelling seems to be an insignificant affair to many scholars who are pursuing philosophy, book-keeping, and the like. It is small business, they think, to be called into a class once

or twice a day, or even twice a week, to spell. They will change their minds, however, a few years hence, when they are mortified again and again by their inexcusable mistakes in spelling even common words. It is not uncommon to see handsomely written letters misspelled; and how the fact detracts from the intelligence of the writer! He may be both a philosopher and a linguist; and yet his deficiency in this particular is a blot upon his intellectual character.

A gentleman from Boston once called upon me to solemnize his marriage. He was a gentleman in appearance, intelligent and polite, and I was much taken with his demeanor. A few days after his marriage I received a letter from him requesting a certificate of marriage, which I had neglected to give him. The following is a copy of the letter as nearly as I can remember:

“Mr. —, Dear Sir: I will be *obleeged* to you if you will forward to me by *male*, a *certifikit* of my *marrige*.”

Of course, his reputation for intelligence was somewhat damaged by this letter. He dropped fifty per cent. in my estimation at once; and yet

it may be that he was well versed in astronomy, chemistry, political economy, and kindred sciences. In early life he may have despised the spelling-book as a slim affair, and now he is reaping as he sowed.

I knew a man of wealth and considerable position, who sacrificed nearly all the respect for him in a given community by the manner of his spelling the name of his neighbor Metcalf. He spelled it thus—Metkiff. His spelling became a “hissing and by-word” in the community; and this fact did as much as any one thing to destroy his influence.

It is often the case that professional and business men, who neglected the spelling-book in boyhood, mar their letters, and even ledgers, in manhood. I have heard a business man say that he was almost ashamed to write letters, because he was such a poor speller. He was a good penman, and was able to ornament his penmanship with many an elaborate flourish; but his spelling was barbarous.

Not long since I read of a lad who applied in writing for the position of errand-boy in a store. The merchant read his letter, and de-

cided immediately that he would not employ him, because he misspelled a very common word. The word was Tuesday; and he spelled it just as many people pronounce it—Toosday.

You will never be too old to attend to spelling; and you can never know too much about it. Some writer has said, "Knowing the alphabet of twenty-six letters a person can learn all things else." It is very much so with the spelling-book.

So with reading. Few scholars are good readers. Too many of them suppose that good reading consists in the ability to rattle off the words at break-neck speed, without regard to sense. Hence, in a school of fifty scholars you will scarcely find ten of the number who are good readers. So many of them think that reading is small business.

One of the finest attainments is to be a good reader. It requires the constant exercise of patience and perseverance, taste and judgment. Only the ripest scholars make the most accomplished readers; and this fact magnifies the importance of the art.

I might speak in a similar strain of other

fundamental studies. Addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division are the alphabet of mathematics. The boy who can master these is prepared to go forward with the more difficult and perplexing branches of mathematical science. The better acquainted he is with the fundamental rules, the more rapid and easy will be his progress in the higher departments of education.

Whatever science engages your attention, do not neglect these more important studies. Give them the place which they deserve in your thoughts and plans. If you cannot be a good philosopher, resolve to be a good speller. If you cannot become a distinguished astronomer, be determined to make a good reader. If you never can distinguish yourself in the higher branches of mathematics, be sure that you can add, subtract, multiply, and divide with accuracy. Then, and only then, will you be best qualified to transact the ordinary business of life.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

EASIER TO FORM BAD THAN GOOD HABITS.

Jan. 12, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I have something more to say about *forming habits*. Too much attention cannot be devoted to this subject. The particular point, however, upon which I wish to write now is, that *it is much easier to form bad habits than it is good habits*. You may be surprised at this statement at first; and yet I think that you will readily see the truth of it. It is in accordance with a principle that rules in every department of creation. The farmer finds it much easier to raise *weeds* than corn or wheat. Cockles and briars will sow themselves if they are but let alone, and cover all his farm. White weed will spread and root out whole acres of grass. It requires no labor, no sweat of the brow, no planning and cultivating, to make it grow and increase. Toil and sweat are necessary only to cultivate the staple productions of the earth, as corn, wheat, rye, and other grains. So of the trades. It is easy enough to make bunglers; and this is the reason

we have so many of them in the world. The superior carpenters, bootmakers, masons, blacksmiths, and printers in the world are few in number—only as one to fifty or a hundred. It requires work, work, work to make this class, so that only a few are sufficiently energetic and persevering to rise to this high standard.

Of all the boys in stores, only a small part of them ever amount to much. They are not willing to work hard enough to win success, or even to win the confidence of their employers. Your cousin, C. T., has just gone into a store at Holliston, and he did not have to beg for or seek the place. He is one of the boys that do the best they can, whatever be the business to which their attention is directed; and for this reason the merchant sought him out, and engaged him for three years. He looked about to find a boy in whom he could have confidence, and he finally selected Charlie as the one for him. If Charlie had been as lazy or negligent as many boys are he could not have had the place. Without toil or attention, however, he might have won a reputation for carelessness, unfaithfulness, and even recklessness; in which

case no merchant would have wanted him in his store.

You will see, then, that it is much easier to be bad than to be good. One profane boy in school will cause half a dozen companions to become as profane as himself, simply because it is so easy for them to form the evil habit. Were it easier to be good than bad, those six boys who never swear would convert the profane boy from his profanity. And so with all other good and bad habits among school-boys. It requires thought, patience, and care to form the habit of order, so that you will hang up your cap always. It requires no thought or pains to throw it down every time you enter your room. The most disorderly boy in the world can do that. I was in a family on Cape Cod several months ago. The father of the family rose to go out, and looked around for his hat. After searching in vain for the article, he inquired of his "better half" where it was. She answered: "You have five or six about the house somewhere, and you might find one of them, I should think, if you were in the habit of taking care of them." Then, turning to me, she said,

“I should know that *his* mother never taught him to hang up his hat when he was a boy.” He threw his hats about anywhere, because that was more easily done. It is easy not to get a lesson; it is difficult to have a perfect one, as you have discovered ere this, though I trust you do not know exactly *how easy* it is to fail in a lesson.

These illustrations are sufficient for my purpose. They show that it is easier to form bad habits than good habits. Boys should bear this in mind. They should ponder it much, because this will make them willing to strive for the good habits. It is so easy to go wrong, that multitudes of youth have formed bad habits before they scarcely stopped to think what they were doing. O how much the young need to think of this!

I do not mean to say that boys are worse than men in this regard; not at all. Every Christian knows that he must “watch, and fight, and pray,” to cultivate the Christian virtues and honor God. To be upright, humble, conscientious, and spiritual, he must be constantly impressed with a sense of his obligations. But

he can be loose in his daily life, and bring reproach upon the cause of Christ, without watching and praying at all. And now, if this be true of adults, how much more must it be true of boys!

Let me urge you to think of this subject. When you hear a boy swear or use vulgar language, or see one idle and thoughtless, reflect that it is much easier for you to imitate him than it is to imitate those of the opposite class. This will put you upon your guard. Consider that all the evil passions of your nature are constantly pressing you in that direction. Resolve firmly that you will labor for the good habit rather than possess the bad one without effort. This will be saying to the tempter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." He will flee from a boy as quickly as he will from a man, who thus boldly faces and fights him.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

LOOK NOT UPON THE WINE.

Jan. 22, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: There is another temptation of which I have often spoken to you; and now that you are away from home among a parcel of school-boys I must warn you of it anew. I refer to the intoxicating cup. You may think that there is no danger in taking an occasional dram of beer, wine, or cider, with the boys in school. But this is just enough to form the taste or appetite for it. There is no drink so good and healthful for a school-boy as the clear sparkling water, and none so safe. I know a clergyman's wife whose young brother became a cider-drunkard. He formed the appetite for cider when he was a little boy of five or six years, by sucking it from the barrel with a straw. When he was but two years older than you are he was a drunkard, and cider made him such. His father and mother besought him to sign the pledge of total abstinence; but he could not deny his appetite. His love of cider was greater than his love of parents, and

so he continued to drink. When he was eighteen years of age his father offered to purchase a valuable farm for him if he would abandon cider; but he replied, "Father, I'd rather have the cider." How dreadful such an appetite! Ought you not to avoid the use of everything that tends to form such a love of strong drink?"

There is now living in New England a doctor of divinity who never discarded wine as a beverage. At least, he drank it at weddings, and on many social occasions. His sons, of course, knew what his example and views were, and they very naturally imitated their father. Now, three of the four sons of this clergyman are intemperate men. One of them is a very miserable wretched sot. And wine, that many people consider so harmless, accomplished the work of destruction. It formed the appetite for more fiery liquors.

I was in a city of this state a few weeks since, where I learned the following fact: The son of an affluent and influential merchant of the city prepared himself for college. He was a very smart, promising youth. He belonged to a Sabbath-school whose superintendent

gave me the facts which I write. While he was preparing for college he learned to love wine. He moved in a circle, or rather his father's family did, where the wine-cup was passed in a fashionable way. Amid these temptations he formed the appetite for intoxicating drinks, and still he was not alarmed. He did not understand his danger. He did not believe that there was any danger. And thus he entered college. There he found associates like himself, who loved wine. They drank together from time to time, and finally James, as I will call him, became a drunkard; not one who was loathsome, besotted, and low, but occasionally he would drink too much and expose his weakness. He was graduated last July, and returned home to his parents. In the month of August he went out upon a spree one night with several boon companions, and became intoxicated. His associates did not wish to take him home in that condition, and so they conducted him to the City Hotel, hired a room, and put him to bed. They left him asleep as they supposed. About two o'clock in the morning, however, under the fearful in-

fluence of that delirium that often accompanies drunkenness, he leaped from his bed, rushed through the window, shivering sash and glass alike, and fell upon the pavements below. His fall was from the third story, and, of course, it was fatal. He survived a single hour in an unconscious state, and then expired. And all this was the result of drinking wine.

I might relate a multitude of similar incidents, were it necessary. But one fact is as good as more to show that there is danger in using the mildest form of intoxicating drinks. If you are wise, you will regard all such facts as warnings, and resolve to "touch not, taste not, handle not." It is because of this danger that the Bible says, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red," etc. "Wine is a mocker," and it mocked the knowledge, learning, position, and decision of the youth whose dreadful end we have just narrated. Take warning from his career, which is a beacon to warn all other youthful wayfarers to shun the rock on which he wrecked his hopes.

Now, boys often try to convince each other that there is no danger in the moderate use of

beer, wine, or cider. Among so large a number of boys as congregate in your school there will be some, doubtless, who will laugh at such ideas as I have penned. They may try to convince you that all this danger is imaginary; that they know better than your father does about the matter. If you meet such school-boys, pay no regard to their views or ridicule. Make up your mind to drink no wine, beer, cider, or stronger liquors, and then stick to it with all the strength of purpose that you can muster. In this there is manliness and virtue. In the opposite there is weakness and folly. The path of wisdom is the path of safety; and the path of safety is total abstinence.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

LOOK NOT UPON THE WINE—CONTINUED.

Jan. 27, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: In my last letter I called your attention to the dangers connected with the use of intoxicating drinks. You may think that there is no danger to yourself, while there may

be to others ; that the rum tempter cannot overcome you. So thought all the youth who have been ruined by the wine cup, in the beginning of their career. The great philanthropist, Howard, had a son who thought so ; and while his father was away visiting the prisons of Europe, and performing those deeds that have made his name immortal, the wine-drinking son became a drunkard. He did not believe that there was peril in his path. Other youth had been ruined before his eyes, and yet he saw no danger to himself. For that reason he fell—fell fearfully, shamefully, irrevocably. If you are wise, you will take warning from such an example.

I have seen many reformed inebriates, and I have been wont to ask them at what time of life their appetites began to form. I once put that question to sixty reformed men at the Washingtonian Home, in Boston. The first man who answered the question was born and reared in Boston, and had been reformed seven years. He said that his appetite was formed so early, that he was carried home drunk from Milk-street on one fourth of July, when he was

nine years old. Another man of fewer years said that he began to form the appetite when he was not more than three or four years old, by eating the sugar out of the tumbler after his father drank his brandy. He became a loathsome drunkard at seventeen years of age, and his appetite for brandy was the same in kind then that it was when he was but five or six years old. He had a stronger appetite for it at seventeen than he had at seven years of age; and yet, at the latter age, he used to stand by his father, and long to have him get through drinking, that he might eat the sugar.

I once witnessed the following scene at the Washington Home, Boston. The superintendent said to the reformed men present, more than fifty in number: "So many of you as think that you could not take a single glass of wine, or cider, or other intoxicating drink, without going back to your cups and becoming drunkards again, please arise." Immediately every reformed man present rose to his feet. It was a solemn and affecting sight. It shows that there must be danger in the wine-cup to boys who "look" upon it with favor, if grown-up

men cannot tamper with it and escape the serpent's bite. A boy who can still reason that he is safe when there are so many disasters to warn him, must have more confidence in himself than other people can have, or else he must lack sound common sense. I expect that you will be wise.

If you knew that the small-pox was in a certain house you would keep away from it, because you know this dreaded disease often spreads from family to family, and proves fatal in many, many cases. But you cannot be more certain of this than you are of the sad consequences of tampering with the intoxicating cup. Hundreds and thousands of youth have been ruined in this way, and the fearful fact is recorded to arrest other hundreds and thousands of this generation, who are tempted to walk in the same path to ruin.

Then, too, it is worse to die of intemperance than it is to die of small-pox. I should infinitely prefer you would die of this dreadful disease than be made and kept a drunkard, and go down to a drunkard's grave. For in the former case your character might be unsullied, and the

bright hope of a blissful immortality fill your dying moments with peace. Then your parents could find consolation in your death. But he who lives and dies a drunkard has no character to challenge respect, and no virtues to be admired and praised. He disgraces his relatives while he lives, and he dies as the dog dies. His memory is painful to his friends. Fathers and mothers love to speak of their noble sons who have fallen in the late war to crush the rebellion. They fell in a glorious cause, and their death was that of patriots. But did you ever hear parents refer with pride to the life and death of a drunken son? Never. It is harrowing to the feelings. "The less said the better" is true in their case.

You hear people say of a temperate person, "He is a good father;" of another, "He is an honored citizen;" of still another, "He is a model clerk." But did you ever hear an intemperate man called a *good father*, an *honored citizen*, or a *model clerk*? Never. The drinking habits named unfit him for all of these relations. If your father was an intemperate man he would take little interest in your welfare;

and instead of being at school now, preparing yourself for future usefulness, you might be begging your bread from door to door. If my son were intemperate he could be no comfort to me; but, on the other hand, every breath he drew would send a pain of agony through my soul. These facts ought to be sufficient to set your face like a flint against the intoxicating cup. No such disaster can occur if you keep the total abstinence pledge which you have taken. In that is safety, and in that alone.

I trust you are getting along with your studies, and that your improvement of time is worthy of universal imitation. And yet I would much prefer that you would be an ignoramus in grammar and arithmetic than to decide against total abstinence, with all the risk that you would run of becoming intemperate. This is the value which I set upon being on the safe side. It is folly to run risks when it is needless.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

EVEN GOOD BOYS NEED COUNSEL.

Feb. 1, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: You write as if you thought your parents had no confidence in your disposition to do well, which is not true. Because I warn you of certain moral dangers that lie in the path of every boy, you ought not to infer that we have suspicions of you. Your father would not send you away from home to school, if he had not the utmost confidence in your intention to do well. But you are young, and know less of the temptations of the world than older persons. Hence, in common with every boy, you need to be told of the moral dangers that beset your way in life. Then you will be upon your guard. There is an old maxim, "Watch an honest man to keep him honest." It is on this principle that I write what I do. Because you are obedient, truthful, studious, etc., I write thus in order to keep you in the same good path. Neither old nor young can be too watchful. Men would fall into vices as readily as boys if they were not watchful.

Having more experience than the young, and knowing more of the wiles of the tempter, they watch as a matter of course. They behold dangers where boys see nothing of the kind.

Your friend R., of W., called upon me to-day, and he gave me a fact that so confirms what I have written to you before that I must relate it. It has to do also with the subject upon which I have spoken in this letter.

Relatives of his in B. have been in the habit of passing the wine-cup to guests, and of setting it upon the dinner table. They have a son about the age of R., and he has been permitted to drink wine with other members of the family. Once R. said to this young man's mother, after observing how much wine he drank at the dinner table, "I should think that you would be afraid to have J. drink so much wine." "Nonsense," replied his mother, "he is a gentleman, and has a mind of his own. Don't you think that he knows when to stop?" Now, mark the result. *That young man was carried home last night in a state of beastly intoxication*, as R. informed me to-day. In this case the mother

needed to be warned of dangers as much as the son. If I had written to her son as I have to you, when he was no older than you are, I dare say that his mother would have said, "You write as if you thought my son were a very hard case." He is a hard case now, you perceive, and perhaps, if some one had faithfully warned him, as I have you, he might have been an honorable young man now. I think you can now see the object of my letters.

I shall have time and space to add only a word in regard to punctuation, to which I briefly referred in a previous letter. Your letters show that there is chance for improvement in this respect. To be able to punctuate correctly is not an acquisition of a single term. It is accomplished only by the thought and observation of years. But if you are careful now, you will by and by be correct in this regard. I have just read an amusing illustration of the difference it sometimes makes in the meaning of a sentence to put a *comma* in the wrong place. Orpheus Kerr completely changes the meaning of the scriptural passage, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous

is bold as a lion," by removing a comma from its true position, thus: "The wicked flee, [flea,] when no man pursueth but the righteous, is bold as a lion." A single letter is a very small thing, and so a comma is a small affair apparently; but you will see by this that either of them can convert sense into nonsense, and make that which is grave ridiculous. Hence it is not a small acquisition to be able to put a comma in the right place. A lady once sent an order to the store by her servant. The order was, "Please send one pound each of tea, coffee, soda crackers, and cocoa." As she put no comma between *soda* and *crackers*, as was her intention, she received soda-crackers instead of soda and crackers. Many boys have mixed up things at school, both in reading and writing, by knowing little or nothing about punctuation. A comma is not to be despised, nor a semicolon, nor a colon, nor a period. They set up a high claim for consideration. They will be seen and heard although they are very little bodies. It would be very difficult to read, even, without them. If you do not believe it, just ask a schoolmate to write a page to you without a

punctuation mark, and see if you can make out the sense. Every boy in school ought to hurrah for a comma.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.



AN INCIDENT AND AN ERROR.

Feb. 7, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I have just been made acquainted with an incident that illustrates the value of good spelling. Several villains undertook to swindle several banks in the city, last Saturday, by presenting forged checks from twelve to one o'clock. It was a concerted plan, and the checks were presented to the different banks about the same time. All of them were successful but one. One of the forgers did not spell the name upon the check correctly, and this was observed by the paying teller, and the attention of the man presenting it was called to the fact. "I will go and get it corrected," he answered, and immediately left, professedly for that object. Of course he absconded; and this speedily led to the exposure of the whole foul

plot. Bad spelling did the public some good in this instance; it exposed rascality. But you will see that bad spelling has not much to recommend it, if it does no good except when practiced by villains. I wish it were confined to this class wholly. In school it is found more generally among bad boys, so that it is not surprising that many villains are poor spellers. Good scholars improve their time so as to become good spellers.

In this case, however, you will notice that the bad spelling did not benefit the speller himself. It never does. It exposed the forger, and thus defeated the object which he meant to accomplish. It always exposes the ignorance of the person who spells incorrectly, so that even scapegoats and criminals cannot expect to derive any advantage from their inability to spell well. I think that here is a strong argument for good spelling.

I notice that your last letter was abbreviated by the use of figures in several instances. You use the figure 1 for *one*, and 7 for *seven*. It is done to abbreviate, and get along faster in writing your letters. But it is not a good

practice for a boy. It will do better for a man to do it occasionally than for a pupil no older than you are. You are forming habits now; and if you form the habit of abbreviating your letters thus, you will always do it, and your letters will always look badly. If it does take a little longer now to write than without the figures, it will pay in the end. I know that your time is very much occupied with study, but I think you can find time to write out your letters in full instead of abbreviating them with figures. Look at the following sentence, and judge for yourself.

One man in five who uses intoxicating drinks becomes a drunkard, and that is twenty in each hundred.

This sentence looks very well if written out in full; but it looks wretchedly if I should write it with figures, thus:

1 man in 5 who uses intoxicating drinks becomes a drunkard, and that is 20 in each 100.

You wish to know what particular portions of the Bible may interest you most. While I hope that you are reading the Bible through in

course, by reading one chapter or more each day, I will direct your attention to certain parts of it. From the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis to the thirty-fourth you will find an account of Abraham's family, and you will learn how his boys made out in life, and that deception in the family will lead to very sad consequences. The most transparent truthfulness alone is safe in the family or out of it. The story of Abraham's family proves that God signally blesses veracity. Then from the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis to the close of the book you will find the remarkable life of Joseph, from the time that he was a little older than yourself to the close of his life; and you will observe the same lesson here of which I have spoken above. The disobedient, unloving, untruthful brothers found themselves in trouble at an early date, while Joseph won an enviable position. True, Joseph experienced many trials and afflictions in consequence of the treachery and wickedness of his brothers; but his heavenly Father preserved him amid them all, and brought him forth triumphantly, all the better man for his bitter experience. There is also the whole

Book of Daniel, in which you will find an account of the good man after whom the book is called. You will notice that he early took an independent ground for the right; that he declared himself in favor of water as a beverage instead of wine, and refused to submit to the king's decree when the latter was training up several youth for the state. He met with some reverses, and passed through several very trying seasons; but he came out right at last. You will notice, too, that he was just such a man as he was a boy—resolved to do right. Daniel is a good character for boys to study.

I will not now refer you to any more particular portions of the Bible in this letter, but will only say that there is no more important chapter in the Bible for the young or old to read than the fifteenth of the Gospel of Mark. There you will find an account of the crucifixion, written in the most affecting style. If you read this, and when you are reading answer the question, Why did Jesus die upon the cross? it will prove the best chapter of all for you to read.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

TOBACCO AMONG SCHOOL-BOYS.

Feb. 12, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I have said nothing hitherto about smoking and chewing tobacco, a very filthy and unhealthy habit among the young. Quite young lads sometimes yield to the temptation, and learn to use the dirty weed. School-boys are very apt to fall into the practice. One chewer or smoker in a school will lead other boys to do the same. A teacher in Boston told me that she had a lad ten years of age who chewed tobacco habitually. Another teacher has a pupil twelve years old who refused to give up his tobacco because "*he loved it so.*" What a perverted taste! Think of it! I hope you will sooner learn to love and chew the offal of the table, which is almost as clean. Look at a tobacco-chewer's mouth and lips. What a spectacle of nastiness! Smell of his breath, and say if the stable does not smell better. See him squirt his tobacco juice from his mouth almost every minute—enough to nauseate the stomach of the beholder. Suppose

he should squirt the filthy stuff into a vessel for a week or month. By that time two quarts of the most disgusting liquid has been ejected from his mouth. Look at it! Did you ever behold such nastiness? And all this comes out of a human mouth. Is it not almost incredible? One look at it will prove an emetic to ordinary stomachs.

Then the whole cords of quids that those men and boys in our land roll as sweet morsels under their tongue. I have often thought of it. If we could gather those loathsome mouthfuls that have been chewed for the last twenty years, and pile them up in one mammoth heap, it would be a spectacle to the nation. The pile would be as large as the Rocky Mountains, and good for nothing. No mortal could tell what to do with it. We would not tip it into the sea, for it would kill the fish. If it were a mountain of guano we could use it; that is just the stuff to enrich the earth. But a mountain of tobacco quids, spread over millions of acres, would destroy the vegetation of every inch of soil. And yet some boys chew this abomination. I do not expect that you will ever do it.

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If you should ever learn to chew it, you may ship for the cannibal islands without coming home. No! I will not say that, for the cannibals might feel insulted. They eat only human flesh, and decline, it is said, to eat the flesh of a negro. As for me, I should enjoy a big slice from the calf of a black man's leg just about as much as I should a quid of tobacco. I rather think you would. At any rate, I do not much fear that you will learn to chew.

But how is it with smoking? Many boys look upon smoking as manly. They see respectable men puffing away at a cigar in the street or house, and conclude that it must be a very nice thing. I hope that you have never been fascinated with such a spectacle, and that you never will be. To me it is revolting, and I always think of the old definition of a cigar, "A roll of tobacco with fire at one end and a *fool* at the other." But boys will say, "Smoking is not so bad as chewing." It is not so filthy, I admit; but it is full as hurtful, in my estimation.

I have two grave objections to smoking. The first is its *expensiveness*. A cigar that is

only fair in quality now costs ten cents. One per day would amount to seventy cents per week, and thirty-six dollars and forty cents a year. In the period of fifty years the amount would be nearly two thousand dollars—enough to purchase a very pretty homestead; and this, too, without reckoning interest on the money. If the yearly outlay should be estimated at compound interest, the aggregate would be four or five times that amount. And all this where only one cigar per day is used. But one cigar will not satisfy a smoker after the habit is fixed. Many smoke five or six each day. I was at a hotel a few weeks since, and a smoking young man sat near me at the dinner-table. A boon companion was at his side. Their conversation was about the price of board.

“I have to pay eight dollars a week here,” remarked the smoker.

“That is not very high,” replied his companion.

“Two dollars more than I have been paying, and that two dollars would just pay for my cigars.”

His companion expressed surprise that he

spent so much money for cigars, when the smoker informed him that it sometimes cost him fifty cents per day for a number of days in succession, but always *two dollars a week*. One hundred dollars a year for cigars! Put it at interest, and find the amount for fifty years. That is a good problem for a school-boy like you to solve. I will not stop to solve it here; but, running it over in my mind, Yankee-like, will guess that the startling aggregate will be more than ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. Yes! many youth waste enough property in *smoke* to make them rich men at sixty or seventy years of age.

But smoking is very hurtful. Thousands of persons have smoked themselves into their graves. The most eminent physicians say that it causes a large number of diseases, and that many cases of sudden death are occasioned by tobacco. And why should it not be so, since it is a deadly poison? A single drop of the extract of tobacco will kill a cat. How then can a youth whiff away, month after month, thus inhaling a poison, without suffering sooner or later. It is utterly impossible. It will tell

sadly upon his health. It must interfere with his studies. His mind cannot be so clear. If he succeeds in getting an education it must be a *smoky* one after all. I did not send *you* to school to get such an education as that.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

THINKING, OR THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES.

Feb. 21, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I received your letter of last week, and am glad to hear that you were getting along so well with your studies. I fancy that you like book-keeping very well—better than you expected. It is a capital study in which to exercise your discrimination, and you must keep thinking that it is all necessary in order to prepare you for future business and usefulness. Look out for the *whys* and the *wherefores*. Do not accept an explanation simply because it is given to you. Resolve to understand it. Be not bashful in making known your desire to understand what is not clear. Your teachers will always be ready to

answer your questions if they are asked respectfully and sincerely. And so they will accept your answers, right or wrong, if they are honestly given. I mean that they will accept them as sincere replies, and accord to you the credit of *thinking*. I attended an examination once, where I listened to a recitation in physiology. One of the committee asked, "What is good to make a person sleep well?" A roguish boy in the class replied, "Eat a piece of mince pie before going to bed." This was not a respectful answer, and so it was not accepted. Therefore you will understand what I mean by honest answers.

A boy must *think* for himself if he would understand the *whys* and *wherefores*, and that is what his mind is for. Some scholars let the teacher do all the thinking for them, and others think just what the book thinks, and that is all. If the book is wrong, then they think wrongly. In other words, they scarcely use their minds at all—that is, as God would have their minds used. If they should make no more legitimate and earnest use of their hands and feet they would never run at all, nor play ball. But

somehow boys always understand the manner of using their pedal extremities; and I wish they all understood as well that the mind was to *think* with.

Let me illustrate what I mean by the above. A boy went to school to learn his letters. He was older than boys usually are when they go to school for that purpose; but he had not had the opportunity to learn his letters before. The teacher drew a large letter A upon the black board. "What is that?" she inquired.

"Don't know," answered the boy.

"That is A," said the teacher.

"How do you know that is A?" inquired the boy.

The teacher did not expect such a question, and she was rather taken aback. After some hesitation she replied, "When I was a child, younger than you are, my parents told me that it was A."

"How did your father and mother know that it was A?" asked the boy again.

"When they were children their teacher told them that it was A, and I have told you," responded the teacher.

“And how did their teacher know that it was A?” the thoughtful little urchin continued.

Now there was a little fellow who began to use his mind properly as soon as he went to school; that is, he began to *think* for himself, as the teacher found to her chagrin. It is the *thinking* boy who “asks questions that a philosopher cannot answer.” Therefore think—think—think—when you study—when you read—when you recite—and when you listen.

Newton would not have made the philosopher that he did if he had not been eager to learn the *whys* and *wherefores* in his boyhood. He was a school-boy when he invented the kite and windmill. His discernment led him to the conclusion that something could be made to sail in the air, and that a windmill could be made to whirl on the corner of his father’s shed. Other boys did not think enough to discover that; and so they played, played, played—studied, studied, studied—while their bright, thoughtful companion invented the kite and windmill. Nor were they insignificant inventions for a boy. Do you not think that there

was quite a commotion among the boys when they first beheld a kite in the air, and a wind-mill flying on the shed? It was an era in the world of *play* almost equal to the invention of the steam-engine in the world of work. Do you suppose that the boys stopped to consider that *thought* did it? I am afraid that they did not, their minds being taken up chiefly with the sport.

Ferguson is another example: He ascertained how a watch was made before he was as old as you are. A gentleman was passing his father's house on horseback, and he stopped to inquire the way. After informing him, young Ferguson, desiring to see his watch, asked him the time of day. The stranger very politely took out his watch and told him, whereupon the boy asked for permission to look into it. It was granted.

"What makes that box go round?" was his first question.

"A steel spring," answered the gentleman.

"How can a steel spring in a box turn it around so as to wind up all the chain?" This was explained.

“I do not see it yet,” said the boy, determined to understand it.

“Well, my young friend,” continued the stranger, “take a long thin piece of whalebone, hold one end of it fast between your finger and thumb, and wind it round your finger; it will then endeavor to unwind itself; and if you fix the other end of it to the inside of a small hoop, and leave it to itself, it will turn the hoop round and round, and wind up a thread tied to the inside.”

This was enough. Young Ferguson went to work and made a wooden watch, which he put into a case of the size of a tea-cup.

You see that *thinking* is the most important business that is done.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.



TRAPS, AND DEFECTS IN EARLY CHARACTER.

Feb. 27, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: It seems by your last letter that many of the boys in school are catching muskrats for pastime. Under what branch of

study does it come? Natural History, of course; and it may prove a very good recreation, provided your books do not smell more of musk than they do of study. It will be good exercise to tend traps, if you are not caught yourself in neglect of other duties. There are different kinds of traps, and those that catch muskrats are not the most to be feared. The traps that catch school-boys are to be dreaded most. Satan goes a trapping in schools, and he often meets with great success. There is the trap of idleness, and the trap of falsehood, and the trap of profanity, and the trap of passion, and the trap of strong drink, and many other traps which he sets, and many a thoughtless urchin has fallen into them unawares. While, then, you become a trapper, look out and not be *trapped* yourself. For it may be far worse for you than it was for the poor muskrat that left his leg in your trap. Better lose a leg than a virtue. If you can't get off with but one, the latter will be of most service to you. I have no doubt that the muskrat thought he got off cheaply in the circumstances. He saved all the character he had, unless he carried some of his character in his

lost leg. He *added* somewhat also to his general character, in my estimation, because he exhibited so much heroism in gnawing off his limb. Rather than fall into the hands of a live Yankee he made the sacrifice. If school-boys would exhibit one half as much determination in mastering their lessons, so as not to fall under the ban of violated rules, there would be few poor lessons among them. You see that a muskrat can teach some lessons.

But I must turn to another topic. Boys are apt to think that their future success in life depends more upon what they may do after they become men than upon all that they can possibly do before. Indeed, I think that most boys imagine that their school-days have very little to do with the achievements of manhood. Perhaps some of them think that the years of school are only a thing of custom, when boys are too young for toil or business. But this is a great error. In order to build up a future character and fortune, it is necessary to build up a good foundation first, just as it is in rearing a house. A man who rears a house to live in takes special pains to lay a strong foundation.

Unless he does, it will be tumbling down about his ears. Many an edifice has been laid in ruins because the chief care and attention were expended upon the superstructure. Precisely so many a man has made a failure of life, because he thought that his success would be achieved by the efforts of manhood, whether his youth were wasted or not.

I have told you before, that early life is the time to lay the foundation of character and success. The years that you spend in school are more important, as bearing upon the achievements of life, than all the other years that follow. You might infer this from what I have written before. We often meet men who live well until they are thirty or forty years of age, and all at once they startle their friends by a sudden breaking down of character. Unexpected developments of guilt astonish all parties. Now, in nearly all such cases, the cause of the failure may be traced back to boyhood. A bad habit formed, or some neglect of early culture, or improvement of opportunities, is the cause of the downfall. The character and fortune had no sure foundation on which to rest, and so they

fell, and great was the fall thereof. Booth, the murderer of President Lincoln, was not made an assassin after he was twenty-one years of age, but before he was ten years old. A single fact will prove it. A sea captain of New Bedford relates that he brought J. Wilkes Booth, with all his father's family, from England to New Orleans, where the father had an engagement in a theater. J. Wilkes was then ten years old; and the sea captain affirms that he was the most disobedient, impudent, wicked boy whom he ever saw. He was invariably impudent to his mother; and one day she was rebuking him for his disobedience on deck, when his father came up from the cabin; and, seeing what the mother was doing, he burst into a rage of passion, and exclaimed, "WHAT! TREATING THAT BOY SO! YOU WILL CRUSH HIS SPIRIT! HE NEVER WILL MAKE A MAN!" And he compelled her to desist. This shows what kind of culture he had in early life. No foundation of character was laid in his boyhood, and so the superstructure which he reared, and which looked so well in the eyes of some persons, suddenly tumbled to pieces. And this is only a

single illustration of a single point. It is so all through the mental and moral acquisitions; so that school-days are everything. You are laying the foundation now. You want a good plan and good underpinning, mentally and morally. Two years now in the school-room is worth more than ten years after you are twenty-five years old. The most important period of your life is *now*.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.



HINTS ON SEVERAL PRACTICAL POINTS.

March 7, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: Your letter was received to-day, and we were very glad to hear from you. I was much interested to learn that you have a boy in school who wrote ten pages of foolscap, in one letter, to his mother, and then did not say all he wanted to say. I should like to have you make a companion of him. That fact tells a whole volume about the lad, in my view. I feel very sure that he is a good boy, and will make a good man. You know what I have

said before about boys loving their mothers. Watch the boy in question in future years, and see if his course does not verify what I have written. Such a boy has not only love for his mother, but also a good share of patience and perseverance. He would never write so long a letter unless he possessed the latter qualities. And they will help him every day of his life, whether he is studying in school, or running as an errand-boy in some great city, or doing business for himself in manhood. The qualities that enable a boy to write such a letter will fit him to do many more important things in after life.

It seems by your letter that you got caught in your own trap. I suppose that the muskrats are glad of it on the whole. I can imagine that they had a hearty laugh over it; that is, if muskrats can laugh. But the way in which it was done confirms what I have said about falling into temptation. Your trap was in the muddy water where you could not see it. You put down your finger to feel it out, and got caught. Precisely so boys are caught by the tempter to all sorts of vice. They do not see

the danger. The trap is concealed in dirty water. Because they see no danger, they conclude that there is no danger; and they are not aware of their mistake until they find themselves caught in the devil's trap, to swear, drink, lie, or steal. Learn a lesson from the accident, illustrating and confirming what I have said before.

I noticed a grammatical error in your last letter but one, and I speak of it because it illustrates the importance of the study of grammar in early life. I suppose you call it dry; most boys do; and yet no branch of study is more important. Without it you cannot speak and write your native language correctly; and this is not excusable, or will not be excusable in your manhood. An Irishman or a German may be excused for errors in composition and conversation, but a native born Yankee, in Massachusetts, or even in Connecticut, where good schools abound, cannot be excused. It mars a letter or other composition to be grammatically incorrect. We see much of this kind of marring among men and women, and all because early education on this subject was neglected. Perhaps many of them considered

the study dry, and therefore concluded that it was unimportant, and now they expose their ignorance, and wish that they had been compelled to study it in their youthful days.

I fear that many boys are no better posted on this subject than the pupil of whom I read the other day. His father desired to know how much he had learned at school in grammar, and said, "Sammy, our cat caught a rat—in which case is the noun cat in this sentence?"

"The nominative case," answered Sammy promptly.

"Very good, very good indeed; but the rat; is the rat in the nominative case too?"

"Why no, sir," responded Sammy, while yet he knew not in what case rat was.

"The rat, sir," he continued, "the rat is in—is—yes—the rat is in—"

"What?" interrupted the father.

"Why, father, the rat is in a very bad case indeed, sir."

His father was not very much pleased with his proficiency in English Grammar; and yet many other boys, and many men, too, do no better than that. So far as their acquaintance

with grammar is concerned they are in the same case as the rat, "a very bad case indeed."

I trust that you will not undervalue grammar. If you cannot possess a knowledge of but one, it will be better than philosophy or chemistry for you. You will be ashamed of yourself in manhood if you are not able to write business letters correctly; and such letters you will be obliged to write frequently if you are engaged in any decent business. Jimmy Flanagan, who has ten cigars and six pipes, and as much candy as a boy like you would eat at once, in the window of his mercantile establishment, may not have to write many letters, and his correspondents might not be surprised at inaccuracies in his epistles. But not so with our native-born merchants engaged in extensive trade, and coming in contact with the polished and best educated men of the land. Say, then, to grammar, "Thou art mine," for when you have mastered arithmetic you will desire to know how to state grammatically the solution of your problems. I may say more about grammar hereafter.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

LESSONS OF THE PLAY-GROUND.

March, 12, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I have been thinking of the different classes of boys to be found in the school-room. I suppose that boys nowadays are very much as they were when I was in school; and we used to have one class of boys who were fond of fishing, fooling, and fun. You can judge what kind of scholars they were; very much like that other class of boys whose teacher said they cared for little but riding, rowing, and rifles. Perhaps they would not differ much from the school-boy who declared that his principal branches of study were pudding, pie, and pancakes. He was one evidently who considered well his P's if he did not his Q's.

Now, it is well enough to have a place for all these things; that is, it is well enough to have a place for *play*, provided it does not trespass upon *work*. Study is work, brainwork, and recreation is necessary to prepare one for this kind of work. But it should be sought

as a means to an end—to relax the mental faculties for a time, so that they will apply themselves with increased vigor to study. The boy who appreciates the object for which he is sent to school will not desire to belong to either of the above-named classes; at least he will be satisfied with a fractional part of the “fun and frolic” which they require. Some writer has said that the “school-room makes the scholar, and the play-ground makes the man.” In some respects he spoke the truth, although the play-ground does not always make a good or wise man. Many boys have been made poor scholars, and coarse, vulgar, profane, and boorish men, by the play-ground. It has spoiled many a youth by its bad associations, and its banishment of a love of study. What has been put into their heads in the school-room has gone out of their heels on the play-ground. Their education in the latter place has been more positive than their education in the former, simply because their interest in *play* has exceeded their interest in *work*. When a boy’s highest aim is in the school-room, his character for intelligence and usefulness will

bear witness to it. But if his highest aim is to be the best jumper, ball-player, boxer, runner, skater, or horse-rider, his character will be a slim affair.

I would rather you would belong to the class of school-boys whose motto is study, play, and success ; study first, play next, and success to follow. Indeed, I am more than happy to think that you belong to this class now, so that you do not need counsel to induce you to walk in that way. Parents find no greater joy than when they know that their sons make preparation for usefulness the great aim of life. It fills their hearts with joy, and they look forward to the future with bright anticipations.

But how does "the play-ground make the man?" Rather a doubtful place to develop true manhood, some may think ; and it cannot be the occasion of much good in this direction unless the boy has an eye to the use he should make of his recreation. There is a certain regard for integrity and real manliness in the sports of youth that foreshadow a future manly character. It is related of one of the noblest and ablest divines who ever lived in this coun-

try, Dr. Justin Edwards, that he was just as proper and correct on the play-ground, in his youth, as he was in a house of worship. No temptation could induce him to swerve from strict integrity. He declined to participate in acts of insubordination, and even in acts of roguery. Profanity, vulgarity, and clownish rigmarole never elicited a smile from him; though he sometimes was considered rather "*deaconish*," yet, on the whole, he was more popular among his associates than boys of an opposite character. There is no doubt that his mode of conducting on the play-ground had its influence upon his future character. Notwithstanding the temptations of early life, and cultivating the right principles of conduct in his sports, he was all the better prepared to overcome the temptations of later years.

A boy who is known to express contempt for his school and its rules, on the play-ground, is not likely to be benefited thereby. For example, we sometimes hear a boy declaring that he cares nothing for the "*marks*" that he may get, referring to the common custom of marking in schools for delinquencies. He threatens to stay

out as "long as he pleases," and the teacher may "put down a score of marks for all him;" and he is the last to move toward the school-room at the call of the bell, caring as little about marks for tardiness as he does about his studies: such a boy will not derive much benefit from playful intercourse with his fellows. The play-ground will not make a man of *him*. If he ever becomes a true man, it will be in spite of influences therefrom. And the same is true of other classes of boys. A game of base-ball is made *base* in more senses than one with many youth. It is attended with so much scolding, swearing, vulgarity, and low breeding, that its influence is wholly *base*. It can be made a means of developing true manhood if the boys please. May the boys on your play-ground always resolve to make it a good thing!

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

FALSE CODE OF HONOR AMONG SCHOOL-BOYS.

March 27, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: There is sometimes a false code of honor among school-boys, which binds them to defend their associates whether right or wrong. They suppose it is a very mean thing to expose a companion, or even to admit any knowledge of his misconduct when inquired of by a teacher. If a boy inform a teacher of a trick or wicked act of a companion, he is treated with rudeness, and sometimes tricks are played upon him. No matter how good he may be, nor how conscientious he is in exposing a naughty boy, he is ridiculed, tormented, and despised. On this account I have known boys to refuse to give any information to a teacher when inquired of, and that too when the offense was of an aggravating nature. Often they will almost falsify their word in order to conceal their knowledge of the offense. And they suppose that such a course is right; that it is a part of a school-boy's duty to shield his fellow from merited punishment, or at least

not to utter a word that will lead to his detection.

This is wrong. There never should be such a code of honor among boys. I do not mean that it is the duty of a boy to be a tell-tale. I would not have him be such a character on any account. Nor would I urge that he ought to volunteer to give his knowledge of even an aggravating misdemeanor; but he should not conceal it when the teacher properly inquires of him. The teacher has a right to make this inquiry; the good of his school and the welfare of the boys committed to his charge demand it. Unless he should thus interest himself to check vice among his pupils his school would become a dangerous place for boys. And yet boys are heard to say that a teacher has not a right to make one scholar inform him of the misdeeds of another. I repeat, a teacher has this right, and he must use it, though with discretion, or his school will not be a safe place for boys.

Take an example. A boy tells a lie to a schoolmate. It is a great wickedness in the sight of God, and a most demoralizing vice

among the young. For this reason all good teachers forbid lying, and visit it with severe punishment when once detected. Now, suppose that a boy perpetrates some mischief in school, and lies to the teacher in order to conceal it. The teacher does not want to punish him for the mischief if he is not its author. The boy persists in saying that he is not the author of it. The teacher is in doubt. while he strongly suspects, after all, that he has the real offender before him. However, he releases him for the time being, that he may inquire into the matter. He suspects that a certain pupil knows all about the affair, and he goes to him and inquires if he knows anything about it.

“I’d rather not tell,” answers the boy.

“But I wish to know,” responds the teacher. “If you know nothing about it you can say so.”

But the pupil refuses to tell, and is sent away. If all the pupils conduct in the same manner, it will be impossible for the teacher to discover and punish the rogue, and his school will suffer in consequence. If one offender is thus shield-

ed successfully, others will be induced to try their luck in disobedience, while their companions will be encouraged to conceal their guilt. Thus the government of the school would be undermined, and the discipline be valueless.

Of course this applies to all the flagrant offenses at school, such as swearing, vulgarity, and kindred vices. No good teacher will try to discover trifling misdemeanors in this way. Such as the foregoing only will claim his attention.

A school-boy should conduct as follows in all cases of flagrant offenses. Say to his companions, "I do not wish to expose you for swearing or lying, but I shall expose you if you persist in these sins. If you stop just where you are I will keep silence, but if you are guilty of the acts again I shall not feel bound to shield you. No. You may ridicule me as much as you please, and call me a tell-tale if you will, I shall do right in spite of your sneers and jeers."

A boy who will do this will command the respect of teachers, pupils—all; and he will do

very much toward making a good school. The rogues will not despise a companion who is so conscientious, nor will they be likely to cut up their pranks, or sneer or lie, with such an associate to jog their elbows. I will guarantee that such a pupil will be popular; and besides, he will save his own conscience and character.

Parents have an interest in this matter. They will like a school all the more if a teacher endeavors to establish this rule of conduct in his school. They do not want a son to do violence to his own conscience by shielding a disobedient scholar. There is danger in it. He will be likely to perpetrate a similar offense himself by and by, after he has warped his moral nature again and again by concealing offenders. Hence both parents and teachers feel the importance of abolishing the code of honor that I have mentioned.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

GRUMBLING SCHOOL-BOYS.

May 4, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: You have just entered upon another term of school, and are so much nearer the end of your school-days. It is all the more important that you heed what I have hitherto written, and apply yourself with renewed diligence to the preparation that is indispensable to success in the business of life. I am sure that you will be all that a fond father desires, if the prayer of your little six-year-old brother is answered. When he was going to bed last night he knelt down and prayed for himself, and then he prayed for you as follows: "Bless Eugene, and make him a good boy, and do not let him have any trouble with his teachers or the scholars, and let him come home as soon as he can." I thought it was a remarkable prayer for a little boy; it certainly comprehends a great deal. If God answers it you will be a fine scholar in every respect; and what is more and better, your character will be unsullied.

I have been thinking of one evil that used to exist among boys in my school-days. I mean boys who were away at school just as you are. The evil was grumbling over what was not relished. Among boarding-house boys there is often a disposition to find fault with food, accommodations, etc. Now, it cannot be denied that scholars are often put upon short allowance at boarding-schools; that bad cooking spoils much of the food that is provided; and that the variety is much like that which the Yankee farmer had at the place where he worked, namely: Potatoes and meat in the morning; meat and potatoes at noon; and both of them hashed for supper. Yet it may not be best to fret and grumble even then. It is better to eat too little than too much. It is more *gentlemanly* to die of starvation than of gluttony. The latter is a *swinish* way of ending life. Besides, I have never known a boy to starve at a boarding-school. Simple plain food is altogether better for health and studious habits; a sharp appetite when you begin to eat, and only the edge taken off when you are done. The object of eating is to support life, that we may

be able to perform the work to which we are called. I am inclined to think that boys see no higher object in eating roast beef and baked beans than to enjoy them in true epicurean style. This should not be.

But grumbling over the fare at a boarding-school does not generally change it; and so it serves only to stir up the ill-will of scholars, and to cultivate their fault-finding propensities. *Making the best of it* is the only wise policy to be pursued in the circumstances, as that will keep a boy in good temper, and promote harmony among his fellows.

I have noticed that those young men who appear to set their hearts upon a good dinner are of the *fast* kind. I see them in restaurants and at hotels, real epicures, bolting down course after course, and many of them have to wash down the last dainty with a glass of whisky. Many of them will rush on to ruin; and soon they will be where they cannot afford to buy a good dinner on account of poverty. I have never known a man who has become rich through his own personal exertions who was

not temperate in eating from his early boyhood. Economy in this thing is just as necessary to the acquisition of property as economy in anything else. An illustration of this sentiment is found in Stephen Allen, a former mayor of New York city. He was lost in the "Henry Clay," when that steamer was burned on the Hudson, and the following "rules" of business life were found in his pocket-book. He could never have carried out these rules unless he had observed also the thoughts suggested in this letter. But read his "rules:"

"Keep good company or none.

"Never be idle.

"If your hands cannot be usefully employed, attend to the cultivation of your mind.

"Always speak the truth.

"Make few promises.

"Live up to your engagements.

"Keep your own secrets, if you have any.

"When you speak to a person look him in the face.

"Good company and good conversation are the very sinews of virtue.

"Good character is above all things else.

“Your character cannot be essentially injured except by your own acts.

“If any one speaks evil of you, let your life be so that none will believe him.

“Let your wants be as few as possible, and your mode of living simple and unostentatious.

“Drink no kind of intoxicating liquors.

“Ever live (misfortunes excepted) within your income.

“When you retire to bed think over what you have been doing during the day.

“Make no haste to be rich if you would prosper.

“Never play at any kind of game of chance.

“Avoid temptation, through fear that you may not withstand it.

“Earn money before you spend it.

“Never run into debt unless you see a way to get out again.

“Never borrow, if you can possibly avoid it.

“Keep yourself innocent if you would be happy.

“Save when you are young to spend when you are old.”

Read over the above maxims at least once a week.

You will observe that these maxims go far to sustain all that I have written in my previous letters. Mr. Allen was a truly religious man, but his rules above related only to his method of business.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

P. S. I trust that your school record for the present term will be as good as those of the previous terms. I have been looking over the reports which the principal sent me, and feel perfectly satisfied with your standard of scholarship. I ought to be satisfied with your standard of *behavior* surely, since it is the highest in the school. You will have your reward in future years.

MARKS, OR GOING JUST RIGHT.

May 12, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: Your last letter came to hand in due time. Those "*marks*" I don't understand. I like to see a boy make his mark in the world, but when the mark comes from the other side it materially alters the case. You

omitted to communicate a very important part of the matter, namely, what were the marks for? A father can judge somewhat of their significance by knowing what they are for. I shall wait to hear about it. Of course I do not expect that they denote anything very serious; but then a *mark* is a *mark* for all that. I like to see a clear record, fair as an unwritten letter sheet, especially with the boys, for that foreshadows a clear record in manhood, about which I have said so much.

The other day I met with an intelligent gentleman, who told me the following story. When he was a little boy he attended school with another boy who was profane, disobedient, and thievish. More than one dinner was stolen by this little mischief-maker. Often he occupied the dunce-block. A flogging was not new to him. His parents possessed no moral character. They gave their son no good instruction. They seemed to care but little whether he was a good or bad boy. The neighbors prophesied that the boy would make a bad man—a very bad one. Some expected that he would end his career in prison or on

the gallows. His teachers were not slow to express their apprehensions of his future rascality and shame. Well, years rolled on, and this bad boy became a man, and lived scores of miles away. The gentleman who told me the story visited that state and town, where he received a good account of the young man. He was twenty-five years old, and was industrious and apparently upright. He had married into a respectable family; and, on the whole, stood well in the community. My informant was surprised at this, and he began to doubt whether the "boy is father to the man." The maxim appeared to fail in this case. He called upon the young man, and was so favorably impressed by his appearance that he offered to employ him in the silk business. The offer was accepted, and the young man was suddenly transformed into a silk merchant. Within two years, however, he was detected in stealing sewing-silk, and afterward he stole a watch. He stole dinners and pencils when he was a boy, and now he would steal silk and watches. His employer could not doubt any longer that the "boy is father to the man;" not he. The ancient

prophecies of the neighbors were coming to pass, and there was no mistake. Circumstances had hindered the development of bad principles adopted, and bad habits formed, in early life; but now those circumstances had changed, and the "bad boy" was bearing fruit, "the apples of Sodom and clusters of Gomorrah."

Now this incident illustrates what I said in the commencement of this letter about a clean record, and what I have so often written about the deeds of early life. It applies to the smallest departure from rectitude as well as to the greatest. It will prove true of idleness, coarseness, vulgarity, anger, etc., as really as it did to thieving in the aforesaid boy. A bad boy is a seed which the devil plants, and it comes to the full ripe harvest twenty or thirty years thereafter. Neither does he have to hoe it, and water it, and dig around it often, to make it grow and yield.

I have not said thus much because I think the remarks apply to you; but they illustrate a truth of which I have often spoken. I do not expect that the "marks" of which you speak denote any grave misdemeanors. But then the

smallest departure from the rules of a good school should be avoided, and pupils ought to cherish an honest pride in a record that is *markless*. I have said before, that some boys will say, "I don't care for your 'marks.' I had as lief be marked as not." The kind of boys who say this you know as well as I. I do not expect that you ever say this. Your clean record heretofore gives me this assurance. And yet I feel that I must say thus much lest you let down your standard in some unguarded hour. Any sort of "marks" are enough to start a fear of this kind.

While your teachers observe the "marking system," do not forget that the All-seeing One "marks" too. Observant of every act and thought, he adds "mark" to "mark" as the life of thoughtlessness rolls on, and nothing but repentance can blot them out. It is an easy matter for boys in your school to work off their "marks;" but God's "marks" are removed only by the tear of penitence. Remember this.

I like the plan of your ball club—no-smoking, no swearing, no wrangling, no disputing, no

vulgarity; that is just as it should be. Boys are apt to form bad habits when playing ball. It is a capital game for exercise, and I love to look on and see it played when all goes happy as a marriage bell. But when there is as much swearing and rowdyism as I have witnessed sometimes, the game is worse than fever or headache for the want of exercise. I would much rather that a son of mine would have dyspepsia, and all the other ills that followed it, than to join such a ball-club and be corrupted by it. I like your club, however; only stick to your good rules, and court-martial the first fellow that breaks through one of them. Let your rules mean something, and your ball-club will prove a good thing. And let your motto be, in the school-room where studies demand attention, and good behavior is an ornament, "Keep the ball rolling."

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

TRUE MANLINESS.

May 20, 1866.

MY DEAR SON : You will take notice of the bearing of all that I have said upon true MANLINESS. By and by you will be a *man* ; and I hope that you will be one in the highest sense of the term. School-boys do not think enough of this. They ought to consider that it requires certain habits, acts, and principles to make manliness, just as really as it requires timber, boards, and nails to make a building. The acquisitions of the school-room furnish a very essential part of manliness, when its best lessons are incorporated into the warp and woof of character. Now if boys would think of this, and try to make *men*, and not suffer themselves to become men only in name and stature, it would be much better for them and the world. But how many of them scarcely ever revolve this subject in their minds. How many never stop and say to themselves, "I must conduct thus," or "I must cultivate this and that habit, and adopt such and such principles, if I would be a *man*." Calves think about as much of growing into lusty beeves,

as many boys do of growing up into genuine manliness.

I would have you ponder this subject every day. Ask yourself, "Am I cultivating the manly virtues? If I keep on just as I am doing now, shall I make a noble man?" These questions mean a great deal. Look around you, and you will see that they do. How many men there are in every town who possess no real manliness. Of loose habits, low aims, sordid desires, and little intelligence, they are mere cyphers in the world, or worse than that. Hence the leading men in society—those who conduct public affairs and mould human destiny—are very few in number. We can easily count them in every community—one, two, three, four, five, six, perhaps ten or twenty—but a fractional part of the men who dwell in the houses, till the soil, work in the shops, and cast ballots. A few men do the thinking for all the rest; they plan, invent, and construct for the whole race. A few make philosophers, rulers, statesmen, or successful merchants or mechanics. Not more than ten merchants in a hundred, in the city of Boston, have been

successful during the last half century. The same is true of the other callings of life. If a carpenter, blacksmith, jeweler, or other toiler is needed, of superior qualifications for his work, men have to hunt for him. Among the masses of men who are found in these vocations, those of superior excellence in their professions are like "angel's visits, few and far between." It is pretty much so in respect to *manliness*; and the fact shows how little the boys consider the matter. If they thought more of cultivating true manliness there would be more true men in the world. I think that David had reference to the idea which I have advanced, when on his dying bed he exhorted his son "to show thyself a MAN." He knew that the prosperity of his kingdom could be secured and perpetuated only by having a true man upon the throne. He feared that his son might become an apology of a man, like too many around him; and it was about the noblest desire which he could express, that his son would show himself a man. If he would do this, David knew full well that his kingdom would be safe, and his son live and die honored.

This is precisely what I want you should make—a MAN. While so many persons are of no more worth to society than so many men of straw with coats and breeches on, I want you should be a full-grown man ten years hence, or less. For this manly development and position supposes the existence of about all the train of virtues and all the acquisitions of which I have spoken in previous letters. Henry Clay once said, “I’d rather be right than president;” and so far he was a man. He who prefers to be president rather than to be right, is not a man; for designing men can buy and sell him, as they do merchandise. For a mess of pottage he will sell even his birth-right. Esau was a type of a large class who choose some transient gratification rather than mental and moral worth.

I refer to the remark of Henry Clay simply to show that here is one element of manliness. All those other aspirations that are pure and noble, and which are found in conjunction with the desire to be right, enter into the composition and become component parts of it. As the best cloth is made out of the best

materials, so real manliness is made of the best traits. And, moreover, in just so far as the whole character harmonizes with the word of God, does it become manly. John Quincy Adams once wrote to his own son: "So great is my veneration for the Bible, and so strong my belief that, when duly read and meditated on, it is of all books in the world that which contributes most to make men good, wise, and happy; that the earlier children begin to read it, the more steadily they pursue the practice of reading it throughout their lives, the more lively and confident will be my hopes that they will prove useful citizens to their country, respectable members of society, and a real blessing to their parents." Hence the Bible has always had a place in the schools of our land. Our fathers thought that manly characters could not be formed without its sacred influence, and their posterity think the same. Arithmetic, grammar, geography, and other studies, are worth all the more when pursued by the light and counsel of the Bible.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF STUDY AND
READING.*June 4, 1866.*

MY DEAR SON: I was glad to learn from your last letter that you had found the facts about Baron Humboldt. I have seen R. since you answered his inquiries about Humboldt, and he is very much pleased with your account of him, and says that he shall put it into his scrap-book to preserve it. I am glad that you took so much pains to ascertain the career of that distinguished man. It is a good thing for you to put the result of your investigations respecting him into a letter, as you did; it serves to fix the facts in your mind for future use. Indeed, it is well for a school-boy always to write a similar analysis of what he reads. Of course he cannot read as much as he otherwise would read, and this is really an advantage, for boys are apt to read books at railroad speed, without stopping to digest the subject-matter of the volumes. If they would take time to write an analysis of the books they read they would treasure it up so that it

would do them good at a future day. Many of the best scholars who have lived observed this practice from their boyhood, and ascribed to it a good degree of their success.

It is well also to apply the same rule to your studies. Whether the branch pursued be grammar, arithmetic, philosophy, or other study, if you should briefly write an analysis each week of what you had been over, it would prove an exercise of priceless value. In some schools and colleges this is required of students, although the analysis is given verbally. When I was in college this was one of the rigid rules of the recitation-room; and I believe that it was one of the most useful exercises of the institution. Many students did not like it, but only on account of the additional labor which it requires. A youth who is lazy, or who loves fun and frolic more than he does study, will not fall in love with the practice. But he who appreciates his opportunities, and studies to prepare himself for usefulness, is willing to perform the labor for the sake of the good that it secures. We can have nothing valuable without labor. You cannot even have *fun* in a game of ball

without hard physical labor. You run and puff and sweat, so get the fun, and it is all the more enjoyable because you work so hard for it. The analysis of a book will not cost you sweat or weary limbs; but it will cost you the labor of thought, and it will consume a portion of time. If boys loved to study as well as they love to play, they would like the analysis of which I speak just about as well as they love sport. I am not condemning *play*, because I know that it is necessary, and has its appropriate place; I am simply making a comparison.

If you only make an analysis of the books you *read*, and do not do this with the studies you pursue, it will be of great value to you. And I would advise you hereafter to do with every book you read just as you did with Humboldt. In biography especially this would prove entertaining and useful. It would be interesting and beneficial to look up the leading incidents in the life of distinguished men, as you did in the case of Humboldt, where you have no complete record of their career. In encyclopædias you can find brief biographies of such

men, also in biographical dictionaries. For instance, you use Webster's Dictionary; it would be interesting and profitable for you to know more than you do of his life. His connection with the spelling-book of our land is an item of great interest in itself. A few leading facts of his life would prove of great value to you. So of certain chemists and philosophers of whom you are told in some of your studies. You are attending to book-keeping; and it would be interesting for you to ascertain the history of such merchants as Amos Lawrence, Samuel Appleton, Abbott Lawrence, and a host of others, whose memories are still fresh and green although they are in their graves. An acquaintance with their mercantile life, in connection with their early culture, will show you the secret of their success, and thus become the inspiration to noble efforts. All such men were made successful according to God's fixed rule. This will appear to you if you make a brief analysis of their lives.

I have just witnessed an illustration in nature of the maxim of which I have spoken heretofore: "The way the twig is bent the tree's in-

clined." I was riding over the highest hill in this vicinity, in comparison with which the hills in the eastern part of the state are molecules, when the gentleman accompanying me called my attention to the trees on the top of the hill. They were all leaning in one direction, not a straight, perpendicular tree among the whole number. The strong northwest winds that prevail here more than all other winds together had blown upon them from their upspringing, so that now they were leaning in the direction to which the twigs were inclined many years ago. It is an illustration of much that I have written to you in respect to early habits, and so I record it. Boys are much like the trees.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

GOING A LITTLE WRONG.

June 7, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I have just returned from my trip, and found your letter awaiting me. Your monthly money-account looks very well indeed, and I think you will conclude that the practice of keeping such an account is very good. You see at a glance how and for what your money goes, as well as how rapidly it goes. Boys, like men, as I have said before, are not aware how fast the contents of their purses become diminished unless they keep a faithful record. They will be more careful, and spend less money foolishly, when they mark down their outgoes.

I am glad to hear that the runaway school-boy is going to the reform school. Evidently he needs *reforming*, and I hope he will yet be reformed, or, as we might better say in these days, be thoroughly *reconstructed*. His heart is fully set in him to do evil. It seems that he has no more regard for his parents than he has for his teachers, and that fact denotes a very

bad boy indeed. I pity his father and mother very much, knowing how great are their efforts to make him a good boy. I judge that they spare neither time nor expense to improve him, and qualify him for usefulness; and this is all the return that he gives for their pains. He is a base fellow, and I am afraid that he will be found eventually in the penitentiary. I am glad that your school is rid of him.

I have been this week to the highest point of land in the western part of the state, where I learned a phenomenon that illustrates one of my positions taken in previous letters to you. On the brow of the hill, in the highest mountain town, stands a house of worship, and when it rains the water runs from the roof of the same into the Connecticut River on one side, and into the Housatonic on the other. I mean by this that the rain-drops on one side of that hill, or mountain, unite and flow into the former river, while those on the other side flow into the latter. Now, the rain-drops that strike the ridge-pole of that meeting-house are very near together, and very much alike, and yet they separate and run in very divergent courses.

So it is with boys often. Two of them may be intimate, companionable, and promising. One aims to go *just right*, while the other is not troubled by a *little wrong*. It is only a very small departure from principle that he tolerates; but this is sufficient to start him off in a divergent course of conduct, so that finally he is as far from his companion who walks uprightly as the two raindrops that separate on the summit of the aforesaid mountain. He goes to ruin while his wiser associate goes to glory. It shows us the importance of striving to walk according to the law of rectitude. Like a train of cars, when a boy switches off from the path of uprightness, he runs on a track that gradually diverges from the right, and at the end of his life-trip is fearfully distant from the terminus of the road from which he switched off.

I have just read the following in the life of the great revival preacher, Whitefield. It is what he said of the moral perils of his own youth, when he went away to school at your age:

“I got acquainted with such a set of debauched, abandoned, atheistical youth, that if

God by his free, unmerited, special grace had not delivered me out of their hands I should have sat in the scorner's chair and made a mock at sin. By keeping company with them my thoughts of religion grew more and more like theirs. I went to public service only to make sport and walk about. I took pleasure in their lewd conversation. I began to reason as they did, and to ask why God had given me passions without permitting me to gratify them. In short, I soon made great proficiency in the school of the devil. I affected to look rakish, and was in a fair way of being as infamous as the worst of them."

You will take notice how easy it was for him to diverge from the right—just about as easy as for water to run down hill. God had mercy on him, and delivered him from the power of wicked companions.

Some time ago you asked what portions of the Bible you should read. It has just occurred to me that it would be interesting for you to learn how a nation springs from one family. We have no history of a single nation that is traced to one family except in the Bible; and

there we have a marvelous one. Beginning with the twelfth chapter of Genesis, we have the history of Abraham's family through three generations, until in the book of Exodus a mighty nation is the result. This nation fills a relation of special interest to God, and its government, institutions, laws, learning, and religion become of the utmost importance. All these things are found in the history extending from the twelfth chapter of Genesis to the book of Job. Remember, that it is the only history of a nation traced to its origin in one man, that we have.

By the way, I have just met with the following rules of Dr. Franklin, which I copy for your benefit :

"Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears, while the used key is always bright."

"But dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff that life is made of."

"The sleeping fox catches no poultry."

"If time be of all things most precious, wasting time must be the greatest prodigality."

“Sloth makes all things difficult, but industry all easy.”

“Diligence is the mother of good luck, and God gives all things to industry.”

“At the working-man’s house hunger looks in, but dares not enter.”

“Drive thy business, let not that drive thee.”

“Employ thy time well if thou meanest to gain leisure; and since thou art not sure of a minute, throw not away an hour.”

“Laziness travels so slowly that poverty soon overtakes him.”

All of which are respectively submitted.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

UNGRAMMATICAL LANGUAGE AMONG SCHOOL-BOYS.

June 14, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I have written to you about forming habits of a certain kind, and I have spoken also of the grammatical use of language, to which every school-boy should give particular attention. I intended ere this time to speak of the power of habit in the correct or incorrect

use of language ; and I will now fulfil my purpose. In very early life we fall into exceedingly bad habits in this regard. You have heard old people of intelligence use very ungrammatical expressions invariably ; and the reason is, that the habit is so fixed they use such language unconsciously. Indeed, we often hear highly educated men use language that is unbecoming, simply because of an early habit. From their earliest years they have been accustomed to employ the expressions, and now they find the old adage true, "It is hard to teach old dogs new tricks." This adage itself suggests a very common expression that is ungrammatical. The mass of men would say, "It is hard to *learn* old dogs new tricks." This is improper. It is *teach* instead of *learn*. People often say of a teacher, "He learnt him (the scholar) his lesson." The teacher never did any such thing. He does not learn the pupil's lesson ; he *teaches* him his lesson. So that the above sentence should read, "he *taught* him his lesson." The fact that a multitude of persons speak in this manner, shows how easily and early the habit is formed.

Another very common way of speaking is, "*aint* that so?" for "ar'n't that so?" It was only the other day I heard a distinguished scholar use this word. It was not because he did not know what word should be used; but he had formed the habit of using it, and now it is very difficult for him to correct it. I find myself often under the power of such habits, when I am mortified and ashamed. Now, a boy like you should not say, "Educated men use ungrammatical expressions, so that it is excusable in me;" but he should say, "I will learn a lesson from the fact mentioned, and not fall into the habit." I know not how long I tried to break myself of the habit of saying *done* for *did*. How many people say "I *done* this," for "I *did* this." Once I belonged to that number, simply because I was not taught to think of the matter and avoid the error when I was a boy.

Let me mention here a number of ungrammatical expressions that are common, and you may watch your school-mates to see if they do not frequently appear. It would be a capital plan for boys to organize a mutual correcting

society, and expose such ungrammatical expressions as drop from the lips of each other. But now for the expressions:

“That was for you and I.” It should be, “That was for you and me.” Here your knowledge of grammar aids you to decide what is right. I is in the nominative case, but should be in the objective, as *you* is, governed by the preposition *for* understood.

“I will give you three *spoonsful*,” for “I will give you three spoonfuls;” according to the rule that “Compounds ending in *ful*, and all those in which the principal word is put last, form the plural in the same manner as other nouns.” We must not say, “two handsful,” or “two mouthsful;” but *handfuls* and *mouthfuls*.” You will take notice here that your knowledge of grammar is constantly needed.

“Each of the boys are to have a reward.” Your grammar will tell you that it should read, “Each of the boys *is* to have a reward.”

“Either of the scholars *are* at liberty to inquire.” It should read, “Either of the scholars *is* at liberty to inquire.”

“You may go and *lay* down.” This is a very common expression, and yet it is very incorrect. Your grammar informs you that *lay* is an active transitive verb, and must have an objective case after it; that is, you must *lay* something down. What are you going to *lay* down. You learn at once that the sentence should read, “You may go and *lie* down.”

“I *set* on my seat,” exclaims a boy in the school-room. He does not do any such thing. That is what the hens do—to set; and if they *set* long enough they will hatch, but the boy never will. “I *sat* on my seat;” this is what the boy did.

“I enjoy very bad health,” is an expression that we very often hear. This is a falsehood; the person does not enjoy bad health unless he differs from his kith and kin. It is the very last thing that I expect to enjoy. What he means to say is this: “I am in a delicate state of health.”

I went into a restaurant the other day, where I read this notice: “Neither smoking or swearing allowed here.” A very good rule is this; but it would read much better thus, “Neither

smoking *nor* swearing allowed here ;” and your grammar will tell you why.

I have not time to follow this subject now as I would like to do ; but I may recur to it again. Let me now impress upon your mind the importance of attending to this subject with reference to future years. There is a good story told of two men who were walking together, when they found a tree bearing fruit. Both of them satisfied their appetites, and then one gathered the remainder of the fruit, and carried it home for future use. But the other man took the tree up and planted it upon his own land, and for many years he gathered fruit therefrom, when his neighbor had none. Always act upon the principle of *planting the tree* instead of carrying away the fruit of a single year. Look out sharply for future years.

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

UNGRAMMATICAL LANGUAGE AMONG SCHOOL-BOYS—CONTINUED.

June 19, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I am glad to learn from your letter, received last night, that you are reading the portions of the Bible which I have hitherto marked. The best book which was ever put into human hands should not be underrated or neglected. The better you are acquainted with it the better man you will make; and it will be quite impossible for you to make much of a man without its influence and counsel.

But I took up my pen to complete what I had to say about grammatical language. I reached the end of my sheet before I said all I desired to say in my last. I am the more desirous of impressing the importance of correct language upon you, because there is so much of character in it. You have noticed a class of old men who are wont to say GALS for *girls*, EDICATION for *education*, and the like; and it sounds very badly to you. You say, "They ought to know better," and so do I. But such examples of ungrammatical language as

I named in my last, and such as I may name in this letter, sound as badly to a class of literary men and women as the above vulgarisms do to you. Your real attainments in knowledge may not receive due credit from this class if you are careless in your expressions. Let me point out a few more common phrases of an objectionable character.

“Is this or that the *best* study?” It should be, “Is this or that the *better* study?”

“Two boys were *drowneded*.” It should be, “Two boys were *drowned*.” This is a very common error, not only with boys, but also with adults.

“Pass me all *of* those books,” I heard a teacher say in the school-room. He could have saved himself the trouble of speaking one word, by leaving out *of*, and thereby uttered a correct instead of an incorrect sentence.

“It was on a *summer’s* morning.” It should be, “It was on a *summer* morning.”

“I may go, perhaps.” The word *perhaps* should be left out, as it is superfluous. It expresses the same doubt that *may* implies, so that it becomes repetition.

I have heard many people say, "I was *necessitated* to do a certain thing." Even a school-boy like you knows that *obliged* is much more correct.

During the late war I read more than once in the papers of the army *retreating back*, as if an army could retreat forward.

"I shall go home the *last end* of the week." What is the *first end* of the week? we are led to inquire when we hear such a remark. The speaker means *end of the week*, and therefore he should leave out *last*. In your day a week will never have but one end, and it is best to recognize the fact in speaking.

"A sad disaster has *befell* the party." Say, rather, "A sad disaster has *befallen* the party."

"That horse is a *most perfect* animal." The man does not mean what he says. He says that the horse is not quite perfect—*most* perfect is not perfection—when he means to say that he is a perfect animal. Therefore he should leave out *most*.

"I go to Boston *oftener* than I do to Providence." A much better sentence is this: "I go

to Boston more frequently than I do to Providence."

Many boys speak of going *over* a bridge when they should say *across*; and they say *above* a week, when it should be *more* than a week. They ask, "*Was* you there?" when they should ask, "*Were* you there?" Also, they say, "Have you *got* a dollar!" They should leave out *got*, inasmuch as the word *have* expresses the idea intended.

How many boys say, "He *fell down*," for he *fell*. He necessarily goes *down* if he *falls*, and *up* when he rises.

But I have not space to continue these examples. They are sufficient to show the importance of study and care at this point, and they rather magnify the worth of your grammar.

I have just been conversing with your Aunt E. about her visit to Europe. She says that the English and French criticise Americans severely in respect to our manner of speaking. She said "*span* of horses" to an Englishman, whereupon he corrected her by saying "*pair* of horses." The Englishman was right. And yet he was guilty of a much worse expression. He

called for "a jug of water," and your aunt watched to see what was brought. Soon the waiter appeared with an ordinary pitcher of water, whereupon she criticised him in regard to the phrase "jug of water." He strenuously maintained that it was right to say "jug of water" instead of "pitcher of water," as Americans say. You would not agree with him; neither should I. A jug is not a pitcher, neither is a pitcher a jug, as he would have us believe. There is a lesson for you, however, in this incident. It is the custom to speak thus in his country. He had become familiar with the phrase, and formed the habit of using it, so that it seemed to him both select and tasteful. From his earliest boyhood his ear had been familiar with its use; and the use had grown into a strong habit with him—an illustration of the power of habit.

Of course you learn that proper conversation cannot be attained without care, thought, and study. He who thinks that this is not a subject for reflection and much care, will surely make a blunderer.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

INCORRECT PRONUNCIATION AMONG SCHOOL-BOYS.

June 22, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I desire to add another letter to what I have already said about pronunciation, and continue my remarks in the strain of my previous letters respecting the grammatical use of language. All that I have said about the importance of the latter subject in its relations to refinement and character is applicable to the subject of pronunciation. It was not more than fifteen minutes ago that I heard a man of considerable culture say *singin* for *singing*. This pronunciation is very common. I am inclined to think that four-fifths of the people do not sound the *g* in *ing*. In the pulpit and on the rostrum this omission is often noticed. Also the *t* in *object* and similar words is not sounded. *For* is often pronounced *fah*.

You may think that these are small matters to be attended to; but it is a careful regard to what you may call the minor points that constitutes good pronunciation. Often the success of a public speaker is greatly hindered by

carelessness about sounding the *g*'s and *t*'s. His more cultivated hearers modify their estimate of his ability in consequence of these shortcomings in pronunciation.

The word *handkerchief* is sometimes pronounced *handkercheives*, which is wrong. The *f* should be sounded. So of *scarf*; many people say *scarve*; and I am inclined to think that there are many *scarves* in such a school as yours, in the winter season, if we may judge from the language of the boys. They should say *scarf*. How many boys say *wharv* for *wharf*; and I suppose that you will add that many men are not wholly innocent of this offense against refinement. One of the words that is most shamefully abused by all classes and ages is February. You have heard it called *Febiary*, *Febuary*, and also *Febiwerry*, instead of sounding each syllable and letter distinctly as the word is spelled—February. You will not have to watch your companions long, and perhaps you will not have to watch yourself long, to learn that the correct pronunciation of this word demands attention.

You will also find that words ending in *ent*,

as *government*, *statement*, *sentiment*, are frequently pronounced as if ending in *ment*. They should be pronounced so as to sound *e*, just as they are spelled—*ment*.

Have you never heard people say *seciterry* for *secretary*? The word is a very pleasant one when pronounced correctly; but when employed as above it is much like edication. If we should print them in a sentence, observe how they appear: Hon. Joseph White is seciterry of the Board of Edication.

A good story is told of a man who heard another pronounce the word *curiosity* as if it were spelled *curosimy*, when he exclaimed, "That man murders the English language." "Nay," answered the person addressed, "he only knocks an eye [i] out." A great many eyes [i's] are knocked out in this way by persons who are not mad, and who never fight.

I was reading a piece of poetry the other day, in which the word *law* was made to rhyme with *war*. I know not how to account for such a departure from all rhythmical rules by an author of some celebrity, except that a careless

regard for pronunciation involved him in the blunder. Probably he had been wont to pronounce *law* as if it were *lor*, a very common error.

The names of the days of the week are often subjected to a torture that would extort a groan from them if they were living creatures. Many boys say Sundy, Mondy, Tuesdy, as if there was no *a* in the last syllable. Then it is very common to hear *Toosday* instead of *Tuesday*. Also, there are a great many *stupid* people in the world, if we may judge from the language of others. But the most *stupid* class of all are those who think that others are so *stupid*.

Boys are very fond of *sparrowgrass*, if we may take their words as proof. What kind of *grass* this is I am not able to tell, unless it be a kind of grass that is grown for sparrows. I imagine, however, that sparrows do not eat grass, and that the boys mean that they are fond of *asparagus*.

I cannot pursue this subject further. I have said enough to indicate how extensively the most common words are incorrectly pronounced. The more you reflect upon this subject the more

importance you will attach to correct pronunciation, even in regard to what boys may consider the minor points. To many the subject of "justification by faith" was of little consequence; but it was a seed-thought in the mind of Martin Luther—perhaps only as a grain of mustard-seed—and yet it grew, and changed the moral aspect of the whole world. Pay attention to these minor matters of education, and the weightier matters will be attended to as a natural consequence.

Now, a good teacher will watch his scholars carefully, to correct them at the points named, and scholars should not complain of their fidelity. Boys are apt to think that the teacher who attends to these things rigidly is over-nice, and that he does it more to show his authority and trouble his scholars than he does for anything else. This is not so. A teacher who does not give heed to these things is not qualified to instruct the young. If he knows enough to do it, but will not, because it will annoy his pupils, or because there is more work in it than there is in allowing errors to pass without correction, he is too lazy for teaching, and he ought

to experience the complete fulfillment of the divine declaration, *that he who will not work shall not eat.*

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

A LESSON ABOUT TRYING.

June 28, 1866.

MY DEAR SON: I have spoken before about difficulties, and I have somewhat more to add thereto. It is worth while for you to consider that everything was once difficult. You think that it is an easy matter now to use your pedal extremities, so that, according to your last letter, you walked eleven miles on Saturday. Yet I can remember the time when you could not accomplish three steps without tumbling over. Then it was not easy for you to walk. It is a great feat for a child to stand alone; but "practice makes perfect," so that he can walk three miles an hour. Once it was a difficult problem for you to tell how many two and two are; but now you can master the most intricate problem in several of the important

rules of arithmetic. Time and labor conquer all things. Mountains are leveled to plains by energy and perseverance.

This thought is worth revolving. Especially should every school-boy revolve it, since he is tempted to magnify his tasks, and pronounce his lessons too difficult to accomplish. Taking this view of the subject will beget or develop a degree of pluck that is essential to overcome difficulties, and insure that manly independence which every person admires. A negro gave the best definition of perseverance that I have read. It was this: "Take right hold, hold fast, hang on, and no let go." A boy who does this in school is never found among idlers; nor does he whimper because he has a hard lesson before him. Many boys have a little of this spirit, but too little altogether for the real work before them. They *hang on* up to a certain point, and there falter and fail. They have not added the "*no let go*" part of perseverance. When Columbus was looking for the new world, his men became discouraged because the object of his voyage was not speedily accomplished. At length their discouragement ran into mutiny,

and they threatened violence if their commander did not return. He begged for three days longer only, and promised he would return if they did not discover land within that time. Before the expiration of three days the sight of land filled them with joy. But for the "*hang on, no let go*" policy of Columbus, the expedition would have proved a failure. Often boys are within three hours or three minutes of triumph, and then fail for the want of a little more pluck.

Since writing the above I have read a fact of natural history in your last magazine, which I forwarded you by mail yesterday, and it illustrates this point. A summer yellow-bird built its nest in a yard in Roxbury. The proprietor of the yard watched the bird with interest; and when she had laid three eggs a cow blackbird came along and added one of her less comely eggs to the number. This is a peculiarity of cow blackbirds; they never build nests for themselves. They lay their eggs in other birds' nests, and other birds hatch their eggs for them. But the yellow-bird of which I am speaking appears to possess a remarkable instinct in respect to

the blackbird's eggs; she will not hatch them, and run the risk of having her own young pushed out of their home and destroyed. For it is true, often, that the young blackbirds will crowd the young of other birds out of the nest when they are old enough to do it. Well, I was saying that a blackbird laid an egg in a yellow-bird's nest. Immediately the latter built up her nest another story, and then laid another floor over all the eggs in the nest, so that they would not hatch. Having completed this, she laid several eggs therein, when another blackbird deposited an egg among them. Again the bird set to work to build up her nest a third story, with another floor over the new laid eggs. She was not disturbed again, but laid her eggs and hatched and reared her young. Here is an illustration of nest-building under difficulties, and it has a lesson for every school-boy. If a boy should attempt to solve a difficult problem, and after reaching the conclusion by hard study he should find an error in his work, and then he should go back and perform the labor again, and still an error appears in his result, and then, for the third time, he should

strive to solve the problem, resolve to accomplish his purpose, and succeed, he would do just as the yellow-bird did. And you would say that this was doing well. I forgot to say that the aforesaid nest of the yellow-bird was presented to Audubon, the great ornithologist.

But those mean, contemptible cow blackbirds, that are too lazy to make a nest for themselves, they are excelled only by those idle school-boys who will not study, and yet try to make decent recitations by using the brains of some kind-hearted companion sitting beside them in the class. And their children are just like them—selfish, cruel, and heartless—pushing the only family that has a right to the nest out of it. This is the climax of meanness. If this species of blackbirds had souls how small they would be! It is painful to reflect that there is a class of school-boys just like them.

If you should put it to a vote in your school, I think the boys would vote the yellow-bird up and the blackbird down. I have no doubt that, among robins, sparrows, swallows, quails, and all other decent birds, the cow blackbird is despised as a scapegrace. Among hawks and

vultures he may have some character, but that is no credit to him. A thief may stand well among thieves.

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

WISDOM IN MINIATURE.

July 4, 1866.

MY DEAR SON : It is the anniversary of American independence to-day, and I hope that you have had a good time. The day ought to awaken important thoughts in the mind of a school-boy who is preparing himself for future usefulness. The prosperity and perpetuity of a government like ours depends upon the intelligence and virtue of the people. Therefore a boy whose aim is high will strive to be all that the Declaration of Independence implies that he should be. He will endeavor to prove worthy of the free government that was established by the labors and sacrifices of the fathers. He will be a patriot of course. A boy who has lived through the civil war in our country, as you have done, ought to despise a traitor and

honor the loyal citizen ; and he ought never to forget, even if he should live to the age of Methuselah, that “ treason is a crime to be punished.” Remembering the lesson of the last five years, he will love his country, and serve her as best he can, by improving both talents and time.

Your last letter gives a full account of your match game at ball. From all that I have seen and known of such trials, I am disposed to discountenance them, on account of the too violent exercise. Ball-playing is an excellent exercise, as I have admitted before, when it is not practiced to an extreme. In a match game the exercise almost always partakes of a violent character, and disqualifies the scholar from study by overtaxing his strength. I have known scholars to be completely prostrated by a long and violent game of ball. In such a case, too great exercise proves as detrimental to the person as too little. On this account you should engage in the recreation with caution, and never continue it until you are exhausted. Boys scarcely know that they are going too far, in the excitement of the game, and they become

weary and exhausted before they dream of it. I think that the violence of the game which you describe will match very well with your walk of fourteen or fifteen miles, of which you recently spoke. Too much of a good thing is good for nothing. A person may as well die by sitting still as by walking himself to death. If too little of a good thing is as bad as none, I think that too much is no better than too little. Recreation and exercise are good in the right time and place, and in the proper quantities.

I have been reading a little book called "Wisdom in Miniature," in which I find much that a boy of your age may well consider. It contains many beautiful sentiments like the following: "Learning is an ornament in prosperity, a refuge in adversity, and the best provision in old age." Nothing could be truer than this, as thousands of persons living will bear witness. You know that learning attracts your notice in whomsoever it is seen. There is no attraction in ignorance. An ignorant person may be rich, but his ignorance weighs him down in spite of his wealth; nor will his

ignorance yield him any comfort in adversity or age. This fact alone ought to be quite sufficient to stimulate youth to energy and perseverance in the path of knowledge.

Another sentiment of the same sort is: "It is less pain to learn in youth than to be ignorant in age." A manhood that is marred by ignorance is a sorry affair, especially when the opportunities of boyhood have been misimproved. The mortification that an ignorant man must experience, especially if he move among decent people, must exceed by far the trial of studying to acquire knowledge.

Here is another sentiment in which I have been much interested: "One part of knowledge consists in being ignorant of such things as are not worthy to be known." This is a very important truth. Boys learn many things that are not worthy of being known and remembered. Many boys have more of this kind of knowledge than they have of any other. It requires a wise head, sound common sense, which Dr. Emmons said was the most "uncommon kind of sense," to be able to separate the chaff from the wheat, and throw away what is

not worthy of being known. Too many youths attach more importance to the chaff than they do to the wheat.

“Nothing is more precious than time, yet nothing is less valued.” How true! Look about you in school, and see how few of the pupils value time as they do money. It is an old saying that “time is money.” He who earns two dollars by a day’s labor wastes two dollars when he idles away that time. To no class of persons is time worth more than it is to the young in school, when they are qualifying themselves for usefulness.

Here is a paragraph which I quote from the little book in question, because it confirms what I have said before about the Bible: “Tell me where the Bible is, and where it is not, and I will write a moral geography of the world. I will show what, in all particulars, is the physical condition of that people. One glance of your eye will inform you where the Bible is, and where it is not. Go to Italy: decay, degradation, suffering meet you on every side. Commerce droops, agriculture sickens, the useful arts languish. There is a heaviness in the

air ; you feel cramped by some invisible power ; the people dare not speak aloud ; they walk slowly ; an armed soldiery is around their dwellings ; the armed police take from the stranger his Bible before he enters the territory. Ask for the Bible in the bookstores ; it is not there, or in a form so large and expensive as to be beyond the reach of the common people. The preacher takes no text from the Bible. Enter the Vatican, and inquire for the Bible, and you will be pointed to some case where it reposes among prohibited books, side by side with the books of Diderot, Rousseau, and Voltaire. But pass over the Alps into Switzerland, and down the Rhine into Holland, and over the channel to England and Scotland, and what an amazing contrast meets the eye ! Men look with the air of independence ; there are industry, neatness, instruction for children. Why this difference ? There is no brighter sky, there are no fairer scenes of nature, but they have the Bible ; and happy are the people that are in such a case, for it is righteousness that exalteth a nation."

Yours affectionately,

FATHER.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

July 12, 1866.

MY DEAR SON : I have now completed my letters upon the topics which I desire you to consider especially, as a school-boy who ought to make a good and useful man. You must have learned from these letters that character cannot be formed without a plan and purpose ; and hence, that success in life is not achieved without cultivating the noblest qualities of mind and heart. It is not a hap-hazard work, any more than making a coat or a watch. You would pronounce a man a simpleton who should undertake to make a coat without learning how. You would not expect that he would secure a very good fit. Still worse, if he should attempt to *fling* the parts of a coat together without measure or pattern. And yet this is precisely the way that many men have made all the character which they possess. From earliest boyhood they had no idea that it was necessary to do anything in particular in order to form good character. So they gave their thoughts

to other matters, as money-making, secular business, anything except direct efforts to cultivate the specific virtues that I have named. They used common sense about raising corn and potatoes, and manufacturing plows, sewing-machines, and clocks; but common sense had nothing to do with forming the *characters* which they have. These were left to the mercy of circumstances, without forethought, wisdom, or even afterthought. What character they possess "*grewed*," as Topsy did: a very hasty glance will satisfy any one of this fact.

Many boys of your age, and many youth of eighteen years, and young men of twenty-one or two, expend more thought, attention, and money upon a suit of clothes that will wear out in one season, than they do upon *character* that will live forever. On reviewing these letters, with reference to the elements of character that win success, you will be convinced, if you are not now, that this remark is strictly correct. A small proportion of the time, reflection, taste, and money that is expended upon clothes, would develop a character that would shine, though clad with rags. There is an old maxim that

“a handful of common sense is worth a bushel of learning ;” and it has particular significance when applied to this subject. There is not much common sense in trying to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles ; and this is just what many youth attempt to do. They try to pluck success from indolence, ease, immorality, and a whole cluster of bad habits. I hope that you are satisfied by these letters that the attempt is futile.

Then, the conclusion of the whole matter is, use common sense in cultivating the virtues enumerated, as you do in other matters ; that is all. Some people exhibit a good share of this quality in certain relations, and none at all in other circumstances. A distinguished professor of mathematics in one of our colleges belonged to this class. He was a ripe scholar and sensible man in this particular department of labor ; but in other matters he exhibited little good sense. One day he was going to the post-office, which was in a store. As he was going out of the door his wife told him to purchase some coffee. Accordingly he called for coffee at the store. How much will you have ? in-

quired the merchant. "I declare," replied the learned professor, "my wife did not tell me how much to get, but I think a bushel will be enough." It was very evident that all he knew about coffee was how to drink it. Wise in some matters, and foolish in others. And so very bright youths are often simpletons about the *modus operandi* of forming character, for which they are blameworthy. While we ought not to expect that every wise man will know how to make a watch, we may expect that every one, old and young, will know that good character cannot be formed without plan and purpose, diligence and care.

The upshot of all that I have written is found in that maxim, "He that would eat the kernel must crack the nut." Many boys think it is too much work to crack the nut. In their conduct on this subject they deny that other maxim, "From nothing, nothing can come." Many living men amount to *nothing*, for the reason given in this proverb, the moral of which is to you, if you would be *somebody* in manhood, you must not be *nothing* now, since "from nothing, nothing can come."

By careful regard to the counsels of these letters, not omitting to make most prominent of all the moral and Christian lessons, you will not, you cannot make a failure of life. It is thus within your power to make for yourself a name that will be honored, and thereby fill the hearts of your parents with joy.

“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left, remove thy feet from evil. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.”

Yours affectionately, FATHER.

THE END.

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